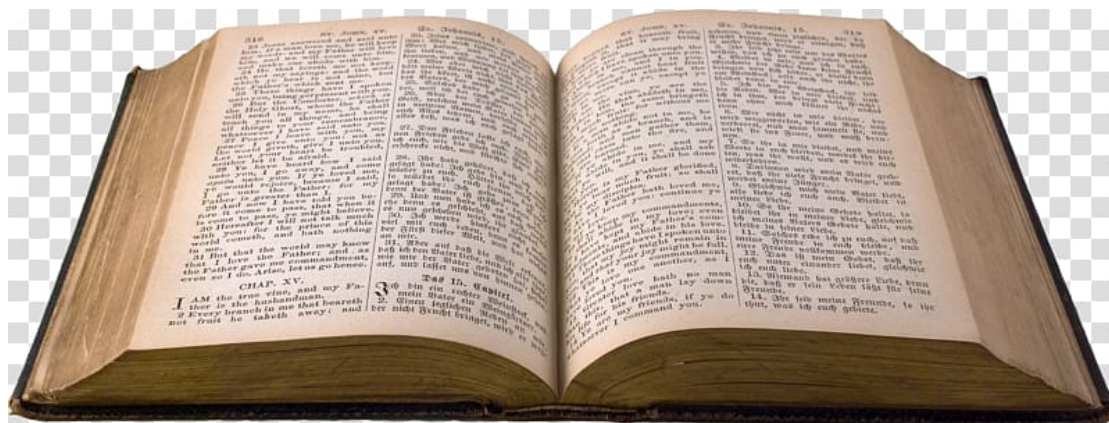


# Trinity 1

## Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2020

### Five Events that Shaped Christianity – Week 1

#### Introduction - Christianity's Core Beliefs



#### Readings:

1 Peter 3:13-22

Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all

who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

### **Reflection**

*This week I am also supplying the text for the sermon in the team streamed service/circular so I have reproduced a slightly amended version here; apologies for duplication if you read both.*

Today I am beginning a seven-week series based on a book by John Pritchard – *Five Events that made Christianity* – and you should already have received the information leaflet to accompany this series. The events Pritchard lists are the nativity, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension and Pentecost which he says are the essence of our faith – and which are, no doubt, the ones we would all have chosen. I am beginning with a general introduction before embarking next week on event one. So this is less a reflection and more a prologue.

Every faith has its own credo and for the most part that credo is based on a body of literature, though tradition and oral records also play a part. For believers, therefore, it is important that they should know that their religious literature is truthful and reliable – that their faith is based on fact and not fiction. For us as Christians, it is the Bible which is the foundation of our belief and especially the New Testament with its record of the life and teaching of Jesus. But just how reliable is the New Testament? The author, Josephine Tey, once pointed out that there were more accounts of the life of Christ than there were of Julius Caesar's campaign in Britain. Everyone accepted the truth about Caesar but many were reluctant to give the same credence to the crucifixion. But that is because Caesar's conquests have no impact on us, but once accept the truth of the Gospel and you are inevitably faced with a choice – do you become a follower of Christ or reject him. Justin Welby has said that: "The best decision that any human being can ever make in their life, anywhere in the world, in any circumstances, whoever they are, is to follow Jesus Christ as their Lord." But reading the Gospel and faced with that choice many simply choose to ignore it and carry on with their lives as before, just as they would if they were reading a history book about Roman Britain.

The New Testament does contain historical detail but it is not a history book. It is a collection of memories and teaching from people who were often close to these five events, were witness to them - or knew people who were witnesses. The texts were not written down immediately, as, in the early days, it was enough for people simply to share their stories and recollections with each other. But in time it became clear that written records would be necessary for those who would come after with no personal knowledge of Jesus' life. Of the Gospels, Mark's was probably the first and was written about 30-40 years after the crucifixion. But many of epistles were written earlier. Of the five events in our series, three, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, are mentioned in our reading from Peter's first letter, and Peter also tells us to familiarize ourselves with these events so we can give a good account of our Christian hope if we are called upon to do so. This series will examine the events on which that hope is founded and which also provide the basis of our faith and the Church which grew from it.

For each event we will look at what actually happened at the time, what it means – the theology which underlies it -and **what it means for us, as a Church and as individuals** Each of these five events should make an impact on our lives; Pritchard says we need to reclaim their power for ourselves in order to revitalize our faith. Sadly, some of the vitality of the early church has been lost; there is often a disconnect between our beliefs and the practices of the church. We limit our faith, reducing it to “dos” and “don’ts;” when it comes to action, thinking in terms of either/or when we should be thinking both/and. Our faith becomes watered down into well-meaning humanism, trivialising the Gospel, when it is in fact vital, compelling and exciting, as these events prove.

Some Christians always seem to be overflowing with the joy of the Gospel, but many of us would admit that our Christian life isn’t always an easy one. If we want to reinvigorate our faith and regain that excitement and vitality in our own lives, these events must become personal - part of our own experience, and a product of real understanding, giving us a faith that helps us to make sense, not only of life but of the world in which we live it. I hope that this series can play a part in making these events real to each of us, helping us to internalise their message, - and empowering us to bring that reality into the lives of others.

Amen

## **Prayers**

### **Today’s Collect**

O God,

the strength of all those who put their trust in you,

mercifully accept our prayers

and, because through the weakness of our mortal nature

we can do no good thing without you,

grant us the help of your grace,

that in the keeping of your commandments

we may please you both in will and deed;

through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,

who is alive and reigns with you,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.

Amen

### **A Prayer in thanksgiving for the Scriptures**

*All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. (2 Timothy 3:16)*

BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:

Grant that we may in such wise hear them,

read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them,

that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word,

we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life,

which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

*(Collect for second Sunday in Advent, BCP)*

**A prayer for racial tolerance – as we remember at this time, the family and friends of George Floyd and all those affected by racial injustice.**

Good and gracious God,  
who loves and delights in all people,  
we stand in awe before you,  
knowing that the spark of life within each person on earth is the spark of your divine life.  
Differences among cultures and races are multicoloured manifestations of your light.  
May our hearts and minds be open to celebrate similarities and differences among our sisters and brothers.  
We place our hopes for racial harmony in our committed action and in your presence in our neighbour.  
May all peoples live in peace.  
Amen *(Sisters of Mercy)*

**Blessing**

Hear the teaching of Jesus:  
“Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”  
Go now and do God’s will.  
And the blessing of God Almighty,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.  
Amen