

# WEEKLY SERMON

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## Jesus' Baptism

*Mark 1:9-13*

For me, one of the joys of a very difficult 2020 for me has been the rediscovery of my local surroundings.

With no chance of spending much time away from home, and with even relatively short travelling not advised and difficult, I have spent time exploring and becoming familiar with the footpaths and countryside near to my home; and in all seasons and all weathers I have found joy in doing so.

A regular walk has been up Pendle Hill, sometimes in good weather, but more often than not with brooding clouds and sprinklings of rain.

On one particularly cloudy and dull day, whilst looking down on the Ribble Valley, there was a sudden shaft of light that penetrated the gloom and shone brilliantly onto my hometown. The world changed; colours danced; perspectives shifted; and to some extent the familiar became unfamiliar.

In the story of Jesus' baptism we see something similar. The very moment that Jesus was getting out of the water he saw the heavens open.

This doesn't mean that there was a little door opening up somewhere in the clouds; but more that Jesus saw around him God's dimension behind an ordinary reality. The familiar became unfamiliar.

It was as if an invisible curtain had been pulled back and there, right in front of Jesus, was the presence of a different reality – a reality that looked something like the kingdom of God colliding into, overwhelming and displacing the reality of a broken world.

Much of my own Christian faith journey has been trying to understand and respond to this different reality even when it can't be seen. Occasionally, we may have witnessed that curtain being pulled back, but most of the time it really is a walk by faith and not by sight.

So as we enter the uncertainties of a new year, with the reality of a broken world all so evident around us, let us remember that the kingdom of God is close at hand; let us pray that the invisible curtain may be pulled back to reveal where and how the joy, peace, love and hope of God lives amongst us and let us give of ourselves to bring something of heaven to those we live amongst.

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HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES