

# St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups 14<sup>th</sup> March 2010

## 'A New Day Dawns – New birth'

### Exodus 2:1 – 10 and Luke 2: 21 - 35



#### **Word: Key points from Sundays sermon:**

The thought of New Birth is an exciting one– the readings from Exodus and Luke are full of meaning and spiritual insight. The story of Moses' birth and that of the presentation of Jesus at just 8 days old in the temple at Jerusalem, contain insights of courage in immensely trying times, of wisdom, of love and compassion. But without God's presence touching each story they mean very little.

**New Birth - God's presence: Read together Exodus 33:15 -16:** *What distinguishes you and I as Christians, from any other person on earth? What marks us out is the presence of Christ. The Christ who by his passion, death and resurrection has given us new life – brought us to new birth. But can we say that the presence of God – his living presence now, is the same as when we came to new birth in Him?*

**New Birth - God's presence in the Church:** The Bishop of Reading was recently asked what assumptions as a church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we are to drop and what assumptions should we be made aware of? His reflections were that: (1) We have to drop the assumption that those who are on outside are not interested in what we have to offer – they are. There is a deep spiritual hunger outside of the doors of every church. (2) The second assumption we have to drop is about the nature of the church – it's not the vicar and the building, it's every believer born to new birth. Ministry through baptism belongs to each one of us.

The assumptions we need to be made aware of are: (1) It's not necessary for everyone to sign on the dotted line to 3 hymns, 2 bible readings, one set of intercessions and a sermon – we have to find new ways of being church but delivering the same unique message - Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. Café Church, for example has brought many people into our building for the first time to experience the love of God. (2) The second assumption that we are to make is that church is not a finishing school for saints, but it's for sinners taking the cure. It's the wonderful amazing presence of Jesus who is at work in us enabling us to find the cure that will bring to life new birth in us and in those with whom we share his life.

**New Birth -The Father's heart: Read Matt. 23: 37 – 38.** This expresses the father's heart to gather the broken hearted, to tenderly whisper his love for each one who needs to hear him. Read the story of Moses birth. What marks out Moses' mother is her courage in the face of immense difficulty and anguish. Moses' sister stood at a distance, but her words of wisdom at the right time enabled Moses' mother to still care for him even though Pharaoh's daughter adopted him. Lastly we see this princess, someone completely outside the family, whose love and compassion reached out to a small defenseless child, whose race was hated by her father the pharaoh. These are the marks of true motherhood – courage, wisdom, love and compassion. These are the same attributes of our heavenly father's love. There is one other attribute; each in their own turn was a risk taker either by choice or by force of circumstances. There are in the story of Jesus being presented in the temple these words: **Luke 2:34** *This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.* Just outside the doors of every church building are people who have completely lost their moral compass. They are crying out to hear and know the truth - 'Jesus loves you' and 'If you were the only person on this planet he would have died just for you'.

**A new day dawns?** Unless we have the Presence, the living presence of God in our midst, the church will be just a group of religious people left desolate. **Read again Matt 23:37:** *how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.* Are we together going to take risks, have courage, move in wisdom, love and compassion so that those who are lost and hurting may know that a new day has dawned and new birth awaits them?



**Witness:** Before discussion, read the Bible passages and ask God to help you discern what the Spirit wants to say to your group. Consider a few questions from the text above or from below - Make sure there's plenty of room for prayer and ministry.

1. You might like to spend some worship time reflecting/meditating on Psalm 139
2. Have you ever experienced the presence of God? Can you describe what happened and what was its effect?
3. How can we know and experience his presence more? What do you think the effect would be?
4. In the story of Moses birth, which character do you identify with most?
5. What does it mean to be a risk taker in the Kingdom of God? Are we called to take risks anyway?