

Lectionary readings: Deuteronomy 18: 15-20; Psalm 111; 1 Corinthians 8: 1-13; Mark 1: 21-28

For reflection and prayer

- **Deuteronomy 18:** Moses tells the people that God will raise up a prophet like him and the people must listen to that prophet. There were many prophets throughout the centuries and then Jesus came to reveal God to us. We are urged to listen to Him. We might like to reflect this week on how good we are at listening to God, how good we are at discerning what is of God and what is not of God. There are many voices today clamouring for our attention, some strident, some subtle. Which voices are we listening to? Where does God feature in our listening? How eager or how afraid are we to listen to God's voice?
- **Psalm 111:** This is a Psalm of praise for all God is and does. Here are some of the things God does: He gives new life, life in abundance, as a gift to each one of us. He comes to us in our need, whatever that is, and offers us His companioning presence in our suffering, affliction, weariness etc. He is always gracious and merciful toward us, forgiving us when we do wrong. Everything God allows in our life is for our good and blessing. Why not reflect this week on all God is for you and does for you?
- **1 Corinthians 8:** Paul says here that it's not knowledge or dogma that builds up the church, but love. It's very easy to think we have the truth and know all the answers. But we are dealing with Mystery. In Paul's day the problem was meat offered to idols and people

were divided on whether it was right to eat such meat. Many things cause division among Christians today. The problem arises when both sides insist they are right. Sadly, in insisting that we are right and others wrong, we are perpetuating the brokenness of the church. Paul says we need to be sensitive to others. What effect do our words and actions have on others? Is everything we do guided by love? We are called to build the Kingdom of God and that is based on love.

- **Mark 1:** This man could not stand the darkness, the badness in him being shown up for what it was, as the light of God in Jesus shone upon him. God wants to destroy the evil that is in each one of us, but often we are too afraid to face up to our shadow side. So we prefer to keep God at a distance, rather than letting Him come close and challenge us. But if we are to be healed and made whole, we need to face up to our 'demons'. So let's reflect on what our 'demons' are and what is preventing us from allowing God to bring us inner healing now.

'Until the light came, I did not realise that I had become so accustomed to the darkness, to existing in darkness I did not realise how much rubbish I had accumulated about me I did not realise how small the dwelling in which I had confined myself. At first it was dazzling, penetrating. It wasn't easy to adjust to the light. Too many things stood revealed I'd rather not have seen. Yet gradually, and with fresh and startling clarity, new hopes, new joys, new life stood revealed, waiting for me to grasp them - if I would.' (Edmund Banyard)

Lord, give me courage to face the truth about myself and go forward into the healing and new life that open before me.