

The Baptism of Christ 10th January 2021

Welcome to Praying Together but
Separately

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

HYMN: HAIL TO THE LORD'S ANOINTED

Hail to the Lord's Anointed,
great David's greater Son!
Hail, in the time appointed,
his reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
to set the captive free,
to take away transgression,
and rule in equity.

2 He comes, with succour speedy,
to those who suffer wrong;
to help the poor and needy,
and bid the weak be strong;
to give them songs for sighing,
their darkness turn to light,
whose souls, condemned and dying,
were precious in his sight.

3 He shall come down like showers
upon the fruitful earth;
that love, joy, hope, like flowers,
spring in his path to birth;
before him, on the mountains,

shall peace the herald go;
and righteousness, in fountains,
from hill to valley flow.

4 Kings shall bow down before him,
and gold and incense bring;
all nations shall adore him,
his praise all people sing;
to him shall prayer unceasing
and daily vows ascend,
his kingdom still increasing,
a kingdom without end.

5 O'er every foe victorious,
he on his throne shall rest;
from age to age more glorious,
all-blessing and all-blest.
The tide of time shall never
his covenant remove;
his name shall stand for ever,
his changeless name of Love.

James Montgomery (1771-1854)

GATHERING BEFORE GOD

I am in the presence of the Living God, Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son:
may we recognize him as our Lord
and know ourselves to be your beloved children;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen

CONFESSION

Because God was merciful, he saved us through the water of rebirth and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. But through sin we have fallen away

from our baptism. Let us return to the Lord and renew our faith in his promises by confessing our sins in penitence.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you, thought our own fault, in thought and word and deed, and in what we have left undone.

We are heartily sorry and repent of all our sins.

For your Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past; and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name.

Amen

ABSOLUTION: The Lord enrich you with his grace,
and nourish you with his blessing;
the Lord defend you in trouble and keep you from all evil;
The Lord accept your prayers,
And absolve you from your offences,
For the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. **Amen**

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

**Though he was divine,
he did not cling to equality with God,
but made himself nothing.
Taking the form of a slave,
he was born in human likeness.
He humbled himself
And was obedient to death,
Even death on the cross.
Therefore, God has raised him on high,
and given him the name above every name:
that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow,
and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,**

to the glory of God the Father. Amen

HYMN: SOURCE AND FOUNT OF ALL CREATION SMF

Source and fount of all creation,
pour your Spirit from above
on the bearers of your image,
offspring of a human love.
Human hopes and human graces
break beneath the weight of sin;
fear and envy wrench asunder
world without and self within.

2 Human love is unavailing
counter-weight to sin and strife;
love of God alone can hold us
on the way that leads to life.
Praised be God, whose Son our Saviour
human nature has restored,
living, dying, raised in glory,
to the likeness of its Lord.

3 Trace, O Christ, salvation's pattern,
God and sinner reconciled,
in an all-embracing story:
new creation, new-born child.
Word incarnate, world's Redeemer,
here in us your work repeat,
signed and sealed your own for ever,
till the pattern stands complete.

4 Christ our universal Saviour,
nature's poet, nature's priest,
through life's troubled waters bring us
to the Eucharistic feast,

where rejoicing saint and sinner
praise the Lord of time and space,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
fount of being, source of grace.

Peter Baelz (1923-2000). © Successor to Peter Baelz

BIBLE READINGS: (THESE ARE ON THE ACCOMPANYING READING SHEET)

OLD TESTAMENT: GENESIS 1: 1-5

PSALM 29

SECOND READING: ACTS 19:1-7

THE GOSPEL READING: MARK 1:4-11

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

SOME THOUGHTS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

Today the church celebrates the baptism of Christ – and although there are a few verses that lead up to the baptism of Jesus and a few verses that come

afterwards, the part of the reading that deals with the actual baptism of Jesus is in verse 9 of the reading:

'In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.'

If nothing else, we know that as far as Mark is concerned, the actual mechanics of how Jesus is baptised is not all that important.

However, don't get too excited for a short sermon. This reading prompts a large question for us all: why was Jesus baptised?

Jesus is the Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, true God from true God, and lots of others things we say together in our Creeds. All of the things we say and believe about Jesus remind us that if there is one person in the history of humanity who doesn't need to get baptised, then it is Jesus.

Furthermore, baptism is a sign of our sins being forgiven – Jesus is the pure, spotless Lamb of God.

Furthermore, baptism is a sign of becoming part of God's family. Jesus is the Son of God – and not even the adopted child of God as we are – just the actual eternal Son of God.

And one more 'furthermore': baptism is a sign of becoming a member of the Church. The Church is the Body of Christ, and Jesus is the Christ.

So why does Jesus get baptised at all? I think the answer is in verse 11 of our reading this morning:

'And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'

Jesus does something that he really ought not to have to do; and after doing that Jesus' status is affirmed and God says that he has done well.

Does that sound familiar at all? It should. Jesus' ministry begins – here with his baptism - with Jesus humbling himself, submitting himself to an act he personally need not do, and then being vindicated by God. The same things happen with the death and resurrection of Jesus: he humbles himself and becomes obedient to death, even death on a cross, and is vindicated by God when he is raised back to life and then ascends to heaven to sit at the right-hand of the Father in heaven.

So we might say that Jesus needs to be baptised as a forerunner of his death and resurrection (death will crop up a surprising amount of times in this sermon on the baptism of Christ). There are other reasons that Christ is baptised:

1. Jesus is baptised to identify with humanity

The reason Jesus is baptised is so that he identifies fully with us humans – if we have got to do it - and we do - then Jesus will do it too. There is nothing we go through that Jesus doesn't know.

The fact that Jesus identifies fully with us humans is the reason that the baptism reading comes when it does just after Christmas and Epiphany. Jesus' baptism is all about incarnation. My favourite Christmas sermon is about chilli con carne – carne in the name of that filling, cheap and spicy little savoury morsel is linked word incarnation: carne – incarnation. They both mean meat, flesh. The incarnation is the fleshing of God, God getting dressed in flesh. If God is going to do all humans have to do (including die), then God will have to get baptised too – even if that really confused and slightly offends John the Baptist and maybe us too.

2. Jesus is baptised to show us where this is all heading

The second thing the baptism of Christ does is that it shows us where this is all heading.

When I left school at the tender age of fifteen, I did an apprenticeship as a cabinetmaker – I used to make furniture and stuff out of wood. The way that you learn on an apprenticeship is, first of all you make a million cups of tea for everyone. Then you sweep the floor about a hundred times a day – neither of which feels like you learn about how to make furniture. Then the 'old fella' cuts a mortise and tenon joint and you watch, then you have a go. First you watch, then you have a go.

When Jesus is baptised he is doing something that we can watch and then copy.

Humble yourself, admit something you know and God knows: you are fearfully and wonderfully made – but you need help. You might be doing alright as far as career accolades go, you might have enough cash to retire early, you might be a lifetime member of a wonderful golf club: but you need Jesus as much as the next person. You need to repent, you need to admit to you, and to God who already knows this, that you can't save yourself.

Then you need to die to self – bury yourself under the water. What good is it to gain the whole world yet forfeit your soul?

3. Jesus is baptised to comment on death – his and ours

The death rate in humanity still hovers around the 100% mark. It is not something we can avoid.

You will die, but just as you can be baptised as Christ was – Jesus has also shown us what to expect in death. As Christ is raised immortal, so too you can rise again – Jesus has shown us what to do.

The Christian hope is that death is not an end but a beginning.

In his baptism Jesus identifies fully with us, and apprentices us – shows us how to be baptised and vindicated, how to die and rise again.

We act as if baptism is the end of the journey. We are, 'done and dusted', we have it sorted. Except it isn't. In fact, it is far, far, far from that. Nor is it enough to pitch up to church on a Sunday because that is what baptised people do.

What you can't do is be baptised twice. You can re-affirm your baptism vows – but you may not want to do that everyday. So what should you do? What you can do every single day is actually live out your baptism vows – to actually turn to Christ, repent of your sins, die to self and live for Jesus Christ.

May God give us the strength we need, through his Spirit, to live out our baptism vows this day, to live as children of God, to die as children of God, and to rise in glory for Christ's sake. Amen.

Harry Steele

HYMN O WORSHIP THE LORD IN THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
with gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him, the Lord is his name!
Low at his feet lay thy burden of carefulness,
high on his heart he will bear it for thee,
comfort thy sorrows, and answer thy prayerfulness,
guiding thy steps as may best for thee be.

Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness
of the poor wealth thou wouldst reckon as thine:
truth in its beauty, and love in its tenderness,
these are the offerings to lay on his shrine.

These, though we bring them in trembling and fearfulness,
he will accept for the name that is dear;
mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,
trust for our trembling and hope for our fear.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
with gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him, the Lord is his name!

John Samuel Bewley Monsell (1811-1875)

OUR PRAYERS

We rejoice in your presence and your love,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

You have made us, you have redeemed us, and you guide us.

We remember in your presence all who are being prepared for baptism or confirmation: all who are seeking to know the gifts of the Spirit.

We pray for our own clergy and for all who are being prepared for ordination and ministry.

Silence

God ever with us: **hear us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

We pray for all who are starting new work or new studies
for the newly married and the newly engaged,
for all who are testing their vocations.

We pray for all who seek to bring peace to our world.

Silence

God ever with us: **hear us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

We give thanks for our homes and our loved ones,
for our godparents and our godchildren.

We ask your blessing upon them.

We remember all who come from broken homes
or who are suffering from broken relationships

Silence

God ever with us: **hear us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

We pray for all who feel they have lost their way,
who are troubled and distressed,
that they may know your love and care.
We remember also those who are ill at home or in hospital,
all who are struggling at this time.

Silence

God ever with us: **hear us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

We praise you for giving us life and life eternal.
We remember especially today
friends and loved ones who have enriched our lives
but who are now departed from this world.
We commend all to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Silence

Merciful Father,
**accept these prayers for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

A PRAYER CONCERNING THE CORONAVIRUS

God of compassion,
be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation.
in their loneliness, be their consolation;
in their anxiety, be their hope;
in their darkness, be their light;
through him who suffered alone on the cross,
but reigns with you in glory,
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

HYMN LISTEN SWEET DOVE SMF

Listen sweet dove unto my song,
And spread thy golden wings in me;

Hatching my tender heart so long,
Till it get wing and flie away with thee.

Such glorious gifts thou didst bestow
The earth did like a heav'n appeare,
The starres were coming down to know
If they might mend their wages and serve here.

The sunne which once did shine alone,
Hung down his head and wisht for night,
When he beheld twelve sunnes for one
Going about the world and giving light.

Lord though we change thou art the same,
The same sweet God of love and light:
Restore this day for thy great name,
Unto his ancient and miraculous right.

George Herbert (1593-1633)

AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

My Jesus,
I believe that You
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment
receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You.
Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;

thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE PEACE:

We are the body of Christ. In the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Let us then pursue all that makes for peace and builds up our common life: The peace of the Lord be with you.

THE BLESSING :

May God the Father who led the wise men by the shining of a star to find Christ, the Light from light,
Lead you also in your pilgrimage to find the Lord. **Amen**

May God the Son, who turned water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana, transform your lives and make glad your hearts. **Amen**

May God the Holy Spirit, who came upon the beloved Son at his baptism in the river Jordan, pour out his gifts on you who have come to the waters of new birth. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you, and those you love, today and for ever more. **Amen**

FINAL HYMN: GOD IS WORKING HIS PURPOSE OUT SMF

God is working his purpose out as year succeeds to year,
God is working his purpose out, and the time is drawing near;
nearer and nearer draws the time, the time that shall surely be,
when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God

as the waters cover the sea.

From utmost east to utmost west wherever feet have trod,
by the mouth of many messengers goes forth the voice of God,
'Give ear to me, ye continents, ye isles, give ear to me,
that the earth may be filled with the glory of God
as the waters cover the sea.'

What can we do to work God's work, to prosper and increase
the love of God in all mankind, the reign of the Prince of Peace?
What can we do to hasten the time, the time that shall surely be,
when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God
as the waters cover the sea?

All we can do is nothing worth unless God blesses the deed;
vainly we hope for the harvest-time till God gives life to the seed;
yet nearer and nearer draws the time, the time that shall surely be,
when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God
as the waters cover the sea.

