

Sunday 9 January 2022

The Baptism of Christ



Sermon © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

Liturgy and prayers of intercession © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

- The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.
- The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl, and then return.
- To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page, <http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 Father, let me dedicate (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

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.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

All Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,

**Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.**

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

The Collect for the Baptism of Christ

Let us pray that we may be faithful to our baptism.

Silence

Eternal Father,
who at the baptism of Jesus
revealed him to be your Son,
anointing him with the Holy Spirit:
grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit,
that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children;
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.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

Thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to

the north, 'Give them up,' and to the south, 'Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth—everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.' *Isaiah 43:1-7*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. *Acts 8:14-17*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Kyrie Eleison ('Lord have mercy') ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))
Kyrie Eleison ([different version](#))

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

All Glory to you O Lord.

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptise you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

Now when all the people were baptised, and when Jesus also had been baptised and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the beloved; with you I am well pleased.' *Luke 3:15-17, 21-22*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

I unwrapped my new printer. It gleamed. It looked beautiful. And it didn't work. Eventually, after much searching, I found the 'on' switch. Then and only then did the printer do that for which I wanted it—it became a printer.

A silly example, perhaps, but it illustrates why so many Christian lives don't reach their full potential. The tragedy is that so many people attend so many churches and sing so many hymns and yet the people themselves do not become holy people. They simply are not Christ-like.

Many people in Britain today think of baptism as a naming ceremony for babies. They call it a 'christening.' That's alright for the word means literally, 'to make a Christian.' At our own baptism, just as at Jesus' baptism in the Gospel reading, the Holy Spirit comes in power into a human life and activates the 'on' switch. Without the Holy Spirit pressing the 'on' switch, we may still become a successful barrister, a millionaire entrepreneur, even a bishop, priest or warden. We may gleam like my new printer, but we will never be the Christian that God wants.

Baptism is, then, first of all, a rite of initiation: that is, initiation into the spiritual life of Jesus. And it starts when the Spirit of God enters us, often (though not always) with the laying on of hands at baptism. The Spirit lives in our soul. But what is he *doing* there? As the reading from Isaiah points out so well, he creates. He created the world and, as the Creed reiterates, 'all that is, seen and unseen' which therefore includes us. When the Holy Spirit enters our soul at baptism it's another act of creation. This time, he creates Jesus all over again, in us. True, we will not reach his level of sanctity and holiness this side of the grave, but the Spirit makes that start.

In order to make us Christ-like, the Spirit changes us. Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot be truly holy and pleasing to God. How, then, do we know we have the Spirit and that he is being free rein to develop our souls? It comes in three stages.

When Jesus first experienced the overwhelming love of the Holy Spirit entering his soul, God spoke from heaven. He repeated them a few years later at the Transfiguration, 'This is my son, the beloved; with Him I am well pleased.' We experience the same when the Holy Spirit enters our soul though generally not as a voice but as a sensation. It will come as a growing awareness of becoming His.

Don't worry that it will be like St Paul on the Road to Damascus. That was a reprimand; St Paul received the Spirit much later. When we receive the Spirit, the encounter will be gentle: it has to be, for gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit.

What happens, then? **Firstly**, we hear God speaking to our soul. He says, 'With you I am well pleased.' It's often an earth-shattering moment, as our soul realises that God is not only a reality that is willing to communicate with us, but that he is pleased with us. And the reason *why* he is pleased is obvious: because we have said

'yes' to him. We have been willing to allow him access to our soul. Saying 'yes' to God always pleases him.

It gets better. **Secondly**, as we explore what it's like having the Holy Spirit in our soul, we realise that growth into holiness is not an option. It never was. The soul that is not growing is certainly diminishing. It's all too possible for the Spirit to enter a soul and, effectively, evicted at a later date. But if we persist, seeking God and being willing to make ever greater room for him in our lives, then our sense of the relationship between us and him will also grow. We no longer go to church to sing and meet but to worship. The only response is to thirst for God. We develop a desire to pray that can take an almost frightening intensity. The Bible suddenly comes alive. At this point, the soul is no longer just pleasing to God. It feels itself to be *beloved*. God loves us with a passion and a devotion that is wonderful.

It gets better still. **Thirdly**, the soul can deliberately seek to be like Jesus. This requires some daring, true, but at this point the soul can see no other option. It wants the Holy Spirit to take control. In effect, the soul wants to become wholly identified with God. 'Here I am!' the soul shouts out to God, 'Come *here!*' And God does. God always obeys the call of a lover. In effect, the soul is transmuting from base metal to gold, from human to divine, from plain Jane or ordinary John into Jesus. And God is delighted. He looks down heaven—in fact, he looks from within his outpost, our soul—and says, 'I once regarded you as a someone in whom I was well pleased. I then regarded you as someone with whom I loved. But now, now you are my child—my son, my daughter.' The relationship ripens. Perhaps it will require further growth after death. But there it is.

My new printer was useless until the switch was switched to the 'on' position. It then became a printer. It could have been an ornament, or on show 'Exhibit A' on a museum shelf. Similarly, our souls are spiritually useless until God activates the spiritual 'on' switch. He does so by sending His Holy Spirit, usually at baptism but we can ask him in at any time. First God calls us 'well pleasing', then 'beloved', then 'my child.' So let's ask him in now.

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,

died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

Jesus calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light.
Washed clean by the waters of baptism,
let us pray that we may live the life to which he has called us.
Lord Jesus, eternal Word,
proclaimed as the Christ by John the forerunner,
hear us as we pray for all who proclaim your word ...

All hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, baptising with the Spirit and with fire,
strengthen us to withstand all the trials of our faith ...
Lord of truth,

All hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, bringing forgiveness to all who repent,
teach your Church dependence on your grace ...
Lord of truth,

All hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, fulfilment of the promises of old,
give hope to all who suffer or are ignored ...
Lord of truth,

All hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, beloved Son of the Father,
anoint us with the gifts of your Holy Spirit ...

Lord of truth,

All hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, bringer of hope,
share with all the faithful the riches of eternal life ...

Lord of truth,

All hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ,
in you the Father makes us and all things new.

Transform the poverty of our nature

by the riches of your grace,

and in the renewal of our lives

make known your heavenly glory.

All Amen.

Merciful Father,

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

The peace

We are the body of Christ.

In the one Spirit we were all baptised into one body.

Let us then pursue all that makes for peace

and builds up our common life.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Spirit of the living God (please click on this link to hear the hymn)
Spirit of the living God (different version)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

The Father's voice bears witness to the Son.

All God has revealed himself to us.

The Son bows his head beneath the waters of baptism.

All God has revealed himself to us.

The Spirit as a dove descends from heaven.

All God has revealed himself to us.

Submitting to John's baptism, Christ delivers us from bondage.

All God has revealed himself to us.

And the blessing of God the Almighty:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

be with you now

and remain with you always.

All Amen.

The dismissal Gospel

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

All Glory to you, O Lord.

John testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptise with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptises with the Holy Spirit.' And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.' *John 1:32*

HYMN 4 Just as I am

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

We have come to Christ, the living water.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God.
You celebrated your new gift of baptism
in signs and wonders at the Jordan.
Your voice was heard from heaven
to awaken faith in the presence among us
of your Word made flesh.
Your Spirit was seen as a dove,
revealing Jesus as your servant,
and anointing him with the oil of gladness
to preach the good news to the poor.
Therefore, as we celebrate the union of earth and heaven,
we rejoice to echo the song of the angels in heaven
for ever praising you and saying:

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

All **Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

All **Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

All **Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Lord of all time and eternity,
you opened the heavens and revealed yourself as Father
in the baptism of Jesus your beloved Son:
by the power of your Spirit
complete the heavenly work of our rebirth
through the waters of the new creation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen**

All **Almighty God,**
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.