

Scripture, Reflection, Church news and up-to-date info

12<sup>th</sup> January 2025

## The baptism of Christ

Jesus Christ being baptised in the river Jordan.

### This week

St Barnabas -  
Service of the word  
9:30 am

Holy Trinity -  
Service of the word  
11 am

Bible Study (St  
Barnabas)  
Wednesday  
10 am

Worship on  
Wednesday

Holy Trinity  
(WOW)

7 pm



## Collect

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  
Amen

## **Old Testament Isaiah 43; 1-7**

But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead.

Since you are precious and honoured in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life.

Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west.

I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth—

everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.

## **Epistle - Acts 8; 14-17**

Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them,

who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

## **The Gospel - luke 3;15-17 and 21-22**

Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not,

John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loosen. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened.

And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

## Reflection

How did we get from the baby Jesus in a manger, the whole nativity and Christmas to Jesus being baptised as a 30-ish year-old man in such a short time—a matter of, what, two weeks? In fact, when you think of it, we still had Jesus in the manger and the three wise men finding him on Epiphany, the twelfth day of Christmas. We don't have much to read in the Holy Scriptures about Jesus between his birth and his being named and, now, this account of his baptism, except for the story of when he was about 12 years old, and he stayed behind at the Temple while his family journeyed on. This adds to the importance of the events of his baptism when the Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove. It is at that moment that Jesus begins his public ministry. Like the others whom John is baptising, Jesus is immersed in the River Jordan. However, when he came back up, the Holy Spirit that he will later pass onto others, comes upon him in visible form. The appearance is that of a dove. And a voice from heaven declares Jesus, as the Son of God and that with him, the Spirit of God will remain. Remember when Jesus was leaving the Disciples here on Earth, he said to them, 'My Spirit I will give to you.' During the very brief span of Jesus' earthly ministry, the total activity of God's Holy Spirit was through Jesus. Anointed with the Holy Spirit, Jesus made obvious God's Divine Compassion in deeds of healing, and in setting free those who were victims of the power of evil. Jesus' baptism is a life-changing event for all of us because we are then baptised with the baptism of Jesus Christ. We are claimed by God through our

faith in Jesus Christ. We know to whom we belong. Our baptism can remind us that no one determines our worth! We belong to God ... and in baptism he says to us 'You are my Beloved!' Our identity, as mysterious as it is, is in Jesus Christ, as we ourselves are sealed as Christ's own forever.

Last week we held our annual convent renewal service in which we celebrate all that God has done for us and affirm that we give our lives and choices to Him. Through our baptism, during that service last week and whenever we attend a baptism in the church, we get the chance to grow and develop our close personal relationship, but it doesn't end there. Because of our baptism, we are called to reach out to others, just as Jesus did. In our baptism we are called beyond ourselves. I remember hearing or reading somewhere that someone referred to baptism as 'the daily garment which we as Christians are to wear all the time.' That is the pattern of where our Christian life comes from, the continuous dynamics of our baptism. Being brought low or humbled or going down into the water, so to speak, washed by what happens in our lives, but then ... RAISED UP. Every day is a new experience of that cycle if we allow ourselves to realise it. And to recognise our sin, our brokenness, our need for repentance, but then, to remember that we are members of the Body of Christ, one in him who dwells in us. Therefore, we can feel revitalised, and we can be restored. All of this, if we truly live it, allows us to thrive in the season of Epiphany, the time after Christmas when we celebrate the light of Christ, especially in our darkest hours: the reality of the baptism of Jesus and our baptism and the power

of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us. Renewing our baptismal covenant helps us remember that we are part of the whole family of Christ. Baptism is also remarkable for another reason; it calls us to look beyond ourselves to the world God has made and loves. It is like a good marriage where each is committed to the other out of love, but we also accept responsibilities because of that love. Because we are baptised, our lives are different. Just as when we love someone, our lives are different because our focus is different. Baptism is a huge symbol: it's the water of creation; we are born anew to life in the Spirit and all the bad 'stuff' is washed off. That original (or 'primal'), sin of pride, the sin of selfishness and ego is symbolically washed off. Baptism is the death of the old self. The old passes away and a new creation is born. What a staggering gift! Remember when two of the disciples of Jesus, James and John, came to him asking for places of honour in His heavenly Kingdom? Jesus answered them by asking, 'Are you able to be baptised with the baptism I have been baptised with?' He meant that there is a calling in our baptisms. We have been given special gifts by God ... and we are called by God to use those gifts for the blessing of others.

Our baptism is not just something to hold for ourselves. It sends us out into God's world. We are commissioned as God's people, marked as Christ's own forever. We are sent to serve our Lord. We are often called to serve the Lord right where we are, here and now—with the people we know, in the places where we live and work. That's usually where we can make the most difference. But, we need to realise that we each have our own special gifts to be

used in the service of our Lord who gave us the gifts in the first place. We don't all have the same gifts. So, that is all the more reason that we need to be mindful of our own gifts, what we do have to offer. God has given each one of us special gifts that set us apart from others. There is only one of you. Each one of us is different and each one of us has something special to share with others. Not only has God gifted each one of us with something very special, and not only do we have a variety of gifts, but also, if these gifts are exercised with love and commitment, ALL of God's people are strengthened.

Too often we look upon the Christian life in terms of duty and obligation. How much better it is when we see our faith in Christ as a gift to be received with gratitude and expressed with joy. Then our attitude in approaching each day is one of anticipating what opportunities will open up for us to use the gifts God has given us. Just as Jesus became empowered for the ministry he was called to; may we realise that we too are empowered for our own ministry...to serve the Lord in whatever form that may take in our own lives.

OUR baptism reminds us that we belong to the Lord. Every time we cross ourselves or every time we wash, we proclaim that; we remind ourselves that we were sealed in baptism as Christ's own forever. If these thoughts seem a little radical, or simply new, it might help to remember that the liturgy used in a service of baptism got there first. At the 'vows', the priest asks the person being baptised (or their parents and godparents) a series of questions.

The first three ask them to turn away from the past and the second set of three ask the candidate to put Jesus in the place left vacant by that repentance.

1. Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?
2. Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil?
3. Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?
4. Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?
5. Do you submit to Christ as Lord?
6. Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life?

In summary, then: God claims us. We are His. Jesus is the Lord of our lives and baptism is the sacramental way of expressing that truth. Thank you, Lord! AMEN

## **Notices**

5/03/2025 **Ash Wednesday** 7pm Holy trinity Waterhead

## **Useful Contacts**

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