



## Reflections & Prayers - The Baptism of Christ

10 January 2021



Today we remember Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan by John the Baptist, and the start of his life as the beloved Son of God. It is good to remind ourselves of the fact of our own baptism, even if we have little or no memory of it. The Greek word used – metanoia – is exciting in that it invites people to look towards a new future where old mistakes are left behind and new possibilities open up. The traditional translation 'repentance' is less attractive because it is often understood to encouraging people to focus on what has gone wrong in the past, rather than what could go better in the future. If we use the word metanoia in this setting it is easier to understand why Jesus presented himself to John for baptism – he was about to open the world to a new future, old mistakes being left behind, and new possibilities opening up for everyone.

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## Readings for this Sunday

These are the readings for this Sunday which you may like to read in your bibles at home.

Genesis 1: 1-5

Acts 19: 1-7

**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."

### **The Baptism of Jesus**

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."

## Reflection from Anne Edwards

Christmas has come, the celebration of the birth of Christ – and now some 30-odd years on our journey through the life of Jesus, as passed on to us through the Gospel of Mark, begins.

It's the shortest of the four Gospels and thought to be the first to be written. I'd like to suggest you find the time to read it straight through at one sitting. And, if you are able to, read it out loud – this prevents skimming the text, and it's quite likely you will come across some bits you think you hadn't known before. This will stand you in good stead as we read our way through Mark's Gospel Sunday by Sunday during the year.

Mark begins his gospel with the words: "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" which is followed by his quoting a passage from Isaiah as John the Baptist is launched centre stage to crowds of Jews who had come out from Jerusalem. John came announcing a baptism of repentance.

The Greek word used – metanoia – is exciting in that it invites people to look towards a new future where old mistakes are left behind and new possibilities open up. The traditional translation 'repentance' is less attractive because it is often understood to encouraging people to focus on what has gone wrong in the past, rather than what could go better in the future. If we use the word metanoia in this setting it is easier to understand why Jesus presented himself to John for baptism – he was about to open the world to a new future, old mistakes being left behind, and new possibilities opening up for everyone.

It's worth noting that for over 300 years there had been no prophetic voice in Israel. The Jews knew the promise of a Saviour, and at various times, through the Old Testament, prophetic voices continued to point the way. Now after this long gap John has arrived on the scene, and the Jews going out from the city to see him are being challenged to repent and be baptised.

At that time Jews were hoping desperately that John was the longed-for Messiah who would put everything right, would fight for them and overcome Roman rule. Was he the Messiah, or Elijah or a prophet? We have to keep reminding ourselves that the Jews knew their Hebrew bibles – they knew Malachi’s prophecy (ch.4:5) “Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes”, this the penultimate verse of the Old Testament before the blank pages, representing the 300 to 400 years that separate it from the New, the period of silence when there was no prophecy, and from 2 Kings (ch1:8) that Elijah was “a hairy man with a leather belt around his waist”. Hence their question to John – “are you Elijah?”

John was very clear in his identity, he was very confident in what he had been called to do. In John’s Gospel, chapter 1, verse 29, we read: “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,” he announced to the crowd.

Mark’s version of Jesus’ baptism is simple: “Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan.” We have to look at the other gospels for fuller descriptions of this: Matthew ch. 3, Luke ch. 3, and John ch. 1, all of which you might find helpful to read.

Up to now we’ve read of Jesus’ birth, but we know little of his life until now – he grew up in Nazareth, was taken to Jerusalem by his parents for the Passover Festival when he was 12, and seemed to be quite at home talking with the teachers when his parents found him. Now John has emerged from his life in the wilderness.

For Jesus this was a defining moment – once he had submitted to being baptised by John, he received God’s Holy Spirit which equipped him for the task ahead, he heard God’s voice, and was acknowledged as His beloved Son.

Most of us will have been baptised as babies and will have little or no recollection of the occasion. However details of the baptism will have been written in the church register in indelible ink. I think this is very important

for us – the occasion of our baptism is there in black and white. Before I could be licensed as a Reader I had to prove that I had been baptised. I did know where I had been baptised but not when, so I contacted my cousin in Tavistock who still attended the Methodist Church there and discovered that the church registers were in the Devon Archives in Exeter. So having been in touch with the office there, I was able to see the details of my baptism – and those of my father, uncle and aunt, and my younger sister all in the same register!

In fact I used that experience at St Mary's, Walkern, one day when a mother and young daughter turned up at the church just as the service was ending. The mother had brought her daughter to see the church where she had been baptised as a baby. I asked the girl if she would like to see the register in which her baptism had been noted, and having got the register out of the vestry safe, she was able to see, in black and white, details of her baptism! She was very excited.

Although we are Christians, most of us don't want to stand out, to be noticeably different. However, we are all asked to point to Jesus by what we say and how we live.

Did you make any New Year resolutions? Have you set yourself a new goal for 2021? Coming from a Methodist background my 'new years' began with the Covenant service that begins each new year with the words: "I am no longer my own, but yours." Can you think of ways, one way even, to help keep yourself rooted in God?

Our lives in these early days of 2021 are so very different from a year ago – and with the variant virus now rampaging round the country, forcing another tougher lockdown which will continue for some time in spite of the promised vaccine – we find ourselves unable to meet weekly for our Sunday Eucharist, our family life is so different, as are working and social lives. But we are being challenged today to 'metanoia', to look towards a new future where old mistakes are left behind – ways of living that have brought the challenge of Climate change, ways of living that have widened the difference between the rich and poor, the disposal of our waste much of it

from profligate living – and new possibilities open up. We are challenged to turn around from anything in our lives that hinders our lives as Christians. Are we invisible Christians, or do our lives reflect the light of Christ?

### Collect for the day

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.

### Prayers

O God, when Jesus was baptised, you spoke of your love for him.  
You showed your love for us through Jesus' death and resurrection.  
By the power of the cross, the darkness of our wrongdoing is banished by  
the light of your loving forgiveness.  
Thanks be to God. Amen.

Lord God, giver of light and life,  
by your word you bring everything into being –  
the far-flung galaxies and the tiniest atomic particle.  
You have given us a world to enjoy and to care for.  
Give us compassion in the use of its resources,  
wisdom in our stewardship of your gifts,  
and reverence for all that you have made –  
for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Lord God, help us to be open to your prompting  
as we seek to discover what you would have us be and do in the days ahead.  
Remind us again and again that you have promised to be our guide  
and companion on our journey.  
Help us to look forward with renewed commitment,  
and bless our thinking and speaking and doing.  
In your name. Amen.

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed by 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.

### Parish Prayers for the week ahead

#### **In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer:**

Sunday	The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia
Monday	The Diocese of Afikpo – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
Tuesday	The Diocese of North Africa –The Episcopal/Anglican Province of Alexandria
Wednesday	The Diocese of the Horn of Africa – The Episcopal/Anglican Province of Alexandria

Thursday	The Diocese of Agra – The (united) Church of North India
Friday	The Diocese of Aguata – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
Saturday	The Diocese of Ahoada – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)

**In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:**

Sunday	Parish of Campton (Deanery of Ampthill and Shefford)
Monday	Parish of Clifton (Deanery of Ampthill and Shefford)
Tuesday	Parish of Clophill (Deanery of Ampthill and Shefford)
Wednesday	Parish of Eversholt (Deanery of Ampthill and Shefford)
Thursday	Parish of Flitton (Deanery of Ampthill and Shefford)
Friday	Parish of Flitwick (Deanery of Ampthill and Shefford)
Saturday	Parish of Harlington (Deanery of Ampthill and Shefford)

**For the homes and families in:**

Sunday	Chaucer Close, The Chowns
Monday	Churchfield, Coleswood Road
Tuesday	Collens Road, Cosne Mews
Wednesday	Crabtree Lane, Cranbourne Drive
Thursday	Cravells Road, Croftwell
Friday	Cross Lane, Dark Lane
Saturday	The Deerings, Dellcroft Way

**The Sick:**

Amy, Claire, Jo, Sue, Christine, Hermione, Karen, Enid, Chris, Sophie and all whose names are entered on our St Luke's Cell Prayer List.

**For the recently deceased:**

Charles Troward, Grace Goate, Audrey Thurtell

**On their year's mind:**

Sheila Daykin, Doreen Atkin, Gordon Tollworthy, John Cox, Edna Carter, Alastair Simpson, Winifred Allison, Eva Foster, John Farr, Harold Slater



[A reminder... of this phone service:](#)

**Daily Hope** – dial 0800 804 8044 for prayer, reflection, music and worship services from the Church of England. A weekly service is available from 9 am every Sunday.

### **Church at home**

We are delighted to produce each week these printed papers. If you would prefer not to receive these papers each week, please let Julie in the parish office know. If you are aware of others in the parish who would also value the opportunity to worship at home in this way, do please contact a member of the Ministry team or Julie (Parish Office Tel: 01582 712776).