

 *St Paul's Anglican Parish of Ipswich*  
**SUNDAY SERMON**

*Epiphany 2 - Baptism of The Lord*

*Delivered by Rev'd Stephen Monsieigneur on the 13th January 2019*

In today's gospel we learn that many are following John, being baptised by him.

There is a high messianic expectation and so naturally people begin to suspect John may be the messiah promised to Israel. But John is quick to disclaim such ideas and clear in indicating where people should look. Luke spends some time detailing John's ministry, lifestyle etc, but only refers to the baptism of Jesus by John in a subtext that is verse 21. Luke then focusses on an interesting aspect that is different in description to the other Gospels, Jesus does not receive the Holy Spirit during his water baptism but rather later when he is in prayer.

This morning I will explore for questions.

- Why was John the Baptist sent?
- Why was Jesus baptism special?
- What is the relationship between baptism and prayer?
- What does it mean for us?

So, Why was John the Baptist sent?

It was John's purpose to wake up the crowd. If you have ever been to see a concert at a club you are likely to have experienced the warm-up or supporting act. This is a band has the sometimes challenging task of preparing the audience before the main or headline act appears. This was John's role for Jesus.

We have just celebrated Christmas – once again, socializing with family and friends, eating more than we should and often the things we are told not to. How many of us can honestly say we have not become somewhat complacent as we After all we know the story, the routine.

This morning we are being shouted at by John, he is telling us to wake up, to take notice.

John did this through his example, his words and style of preaching. He was blunt, to the point and had no time for fools. But maybe such presence was seen by others not the way we see it but rather as a sign of John's commitment to his belief. He was not talking rubbish, otherwise he would have been disregarded as mad. No John spoke the truth that God had told him to speak. It was John's purpose to wake up the crowd.

Why was Jesus baptism special?

Jesus is the sinless Son of God. Luke does not spell this out, but in Matthew's Gospel we see John the Baptist asking exactly that question. "I need to be baptised by you, and you come to me?" (Matt 3:14)

So why did the sinless Son of God come to be baptised? Let me tell you a story;

You may have heard of the Ten boom family. In 1844 near Amsterdam, Wilhelm Ten Boon started a weekly prayer group for the salvation of the Jews. Meeting weekly these meetings continued

uninterrupted until 1944 when the Ten Boon family now led by Caspar ten Boon - Wilhelm's Son - were sent to a concentration camp for hiding Jews from German forces.

When the Jews were forced to wear the "Star of David," Casper lined up for one. He wore it because he wanted to identify himself with the people for whom he and his family had been praying for all those years. He didn't have to wear the Star but chose to as a sign that he was prepared to be completely identified with the Jews. Casper was willing to wear a sign of shame and suffer persecution for the sake of the people he loved.

In the same way - Jesus does not have to be baptised. But because he loves us so much, he is baptised to identify himself with us, just as Caspar Ten Boom put on the yellow star to identify himself with the Jews he loved so much.

Following Jesus Baptism, the heavens open, and we hear the voice of God - father. "You my son, the beloved, in you I am well pleased" (Lk 3:22)

What is the relationship between baptism and prayer?

Throughout Luke's Gospel, the Spirit surrounds everything Jesus does. John the Baptist predicts one who "will baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Luke 3:16) and then after Jesus is baptised, "the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove" but Baptism without a life of ongoing prayer will not contribute to spiritual growth.

At our own baptisms the Holy Spirit came down. For some, they will never know a time since their baptism when the Spirit was not present in their life. Yet for others, it is some time after we are baptised that we experience the manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

Interestingly Luke observes that it is "AFTER Jesus was baptised" as he "was praying" that the Spirit comes. Not in the middle of the baptism, but afterwards.

Being baptised is a bit like having a tap in your bath room. A tap is rather essential, but you still must turn it on to get water. Being baptised is not the end of a journey but the beginning. For the Spirit to freely work through you, you need to know it.

How is this relevant to us today?

Through baptism we are;

**JOINED WITH JESUS**

**PICKED BY THE FATHER**

**EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT**

So what, what do these things give us?

Simply, the power to serve.

Through our baptism God is dressing us to be disciples of Christ to spread his word of love, redemption and ultimately eternity in divine presence. God gave you like Jesus a name at baptism. God said, "you are **MY BELOVED CHILD**"

God reveals you like Jesus to the world. Now John's ministry will end and Jesus's begin. In the same way, our baptism is meant to mark the start of our ministry.

Fr Tim Zingale described baptism as being like "a boarding pass to a life of adventure with Jesus. "Well a boarding pass is not much use if you don't get on the plane. But Christianity is a plane on which there are no passengers. You've been given a boarding pass because you've got a job to do. Only through prayer and listening do you really have a chance of hearing God talk to you. Amen.