

The Baptism of Christ. 9 January 2022

Sermon. Revd David Treharne

What is the Baptism of Jesus making known to us?

We are in this season of Epiphany... a season of good things for the church being revealed and made known to us, and today as we think about Jesus' baptism some really important things are made known about who God is, and particularly Jesus, and who we are.

At this baptismal event in the Jordan God is revealed as Trinity and the uniqueness of Jesus is revealed. Jesus is the Christ and the second person of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity is not some 'Clerk Kent Superman' 'all in one' God where God the Father strips off, dashes down from heaven and puts on skin and humanity... and then pulls off the skin again and takes on the form of Holy Spirit (heresy of Modalism). No, here at Christ's baptism the plurality of God is revealed. The community of the 'One God' is revealed. All persons of the Holy Trinity are present and distinct in the same place at the same time.

Luke in his Gospel records:

- Jesus in the water;
- the distinctive presence of the Holy Spirit like a dove upon him;
- and the distinctive voice of the Father uttering words over his Son, namely Jesus.

Here and now at his baptism God's mission and plan of salvation is taking off in and through the unique person of Jesus... but with right royal backing of the Father and Spirit. "You are my Son, the beloved, with you I am well pleased."

The voice uttering "You are my Son," a quote from Psalm 2, verse 7, announces "Here he is, my chosen One, your Messiah, sent from heaven to bring salvation to the nations."

There is a prophetic reference to Isaiah 42 verse 1.

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will bring justice to the nations.

"Here is the Christ, the anointed one, who has my Spirit within him."

In all that is going on with speculation about John the Baptist. It is clear at this moment, John is no way the Messiah and the Christ... this Jesus is!

Jesus' baptism identifies him with humanity and the human condition, and identifies him with all who are baptised. What does that mean?

In that moment in the water Jesus came to be with us and identify with all those who needed and need washing, cleansing, refreshment, a new start, a new beginning, a spiritual awakening, a life filled with God and gives them a new way of being. Jesus offers a way for this to happen. Come follow me and I will lead you to be the best of your humanity with my humanity.

Jesus unites himself with them and with us and with humanity, so we can unite ourselves with Him, with God and with the divine.

As some of my favourite early church characters, Irenaeus and Athanasius says, *“Jesus becomes one of us so that we might become one with him.”*

“He has become what we are in order that we might become what he is.”

He comes, assumes and takes what we are. He takes on our humanity so that we might share in his divinity... be transformed.

“He became what we are so that we might become what He is.”

Let us share in a baptism like His!

Jesus is the Son of God. And through Him we become children of God by adoption and grace.

Galatians 4:4-5 says, *“But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive our adoption as children.”*

Redemption and Adoption. That’s why Jesus came. That’s why the Incarnation happened. That’s what we’re plunged into through baptism! Christ has redeemed us in order that we might receive the adoption (we’re already loved before he redeems us). There’s a big point here. So often our focus is all on redemption (forgiveness, being saved) so much so that we forget the purpose of redemption is to be adopted as God’s children in intimate relationship with him. The purpose of having our sins washed away is to be in union with Divine Holiness (reconciled to God!!). The purpose of going under the water is to come back up again! Dying in order to live. The purpose of dying to the old life is to live the new one, not to stay dead!

We have a new status and identity as God’s beloved children... just like Jesus.

‘Raised’ and ‘raised’ as his children we hopefully bear the likeness of God (although it’s sometimes best not to consider this merely in human terms! This happens) because of the gift of his Spirit within us.

Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One. And in and through baptism we are anointed with His anointing. St Cyril calls us “Little Christ’s.” Little anointed one. Jesus is the One who

has the Spirit without measure; we receive His Spirit, the Spirit of Adoption, from Him, by grace and hopefully become conformed to His image... as his Spirit works in us to potentially great lengths and depths so we reveal and produce the gifts and fruits of His Spirit and are empowered to carry out the mission of God just as Jesus did. He is divine by nature, yet by grace and Spirit we are made "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). As Christ was anointed by the Spirit so in Christ we too are anointed!

We become part of the divine community Father, Son and Holy Spirit revealed at Jesus' baptism. We are united to Christ, and in Him, we now share His relationship with His Father. The Father loves us his children with the very same love which He has for His Son.

Jesus became what we are, so that we might become what He is. We are adopted as God's children, anointed by his Holy Spirit and have fellowship with the divine community! Awesome. We have access to the Father, through Jesus by the Spirit.

Jesus is the beloved Son, and through our union with the Incarnate Christ, we become beloved children of God. **And therefore, also brothers and sisters of one another in God's family**, the church who live to God's praise and glory in the world... being salt and light... and bringing the Good News of salvation, redemption and adoption and transformation to the world. As the baptised Christ takes on his role as servant of God, so we also join in Christ's mission as servants of God.

This baptism we share in Christ Jesus is a whole new way of living and being. It is not merely an event but a new way of life in community with God and one another.

Over this year we will be working out the implications of our baptism in this Community of Faith of which we are a part, and today I am inviting us all to renew our commitment to God and one another.

The Baptism of Christ points to all that God wants to do in our lives!!! And it is mind blowingly wonderful!!!

Epiphanytide: The Baptism of Christ

Renewal of the Covenant

The priest says:

In the Old Covenant, God chose Israel to be his people and to obey his laws. Our Lord Jesus Christ, by his death and resurrection, has given a New Covenant to all who trust in him. On the one side, God promises to give new life in Christ. On the other side, we are pledged to live no more for ourselves but for him.

Let us now renew our part in this Covenant which God has made with his people, and take the yoke of Christ upon us.

Christ has many services to be done; some are easy, others are difficult; some bring honour, others bring reproach; some are suitable to our natural inclinations and material interests, others are contrary to both. In some we may please Christ and please ourselves, in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves. Yet the power to do all these things is given us in Christ who strengthens us.

Lord God, in our baptism you called us and brought us into your Church, commissioning us to witness to the faith of the crucified Christ and to be his faithful disciples to the end of our lives; so now with joy we take upon ourselves the yoke of obedience and for love of you engage ourselves to seek and do your perfect will.

We are no longer our own, but yours.

We are no longer our own, but yours.

Put us to what you will, rank us with whom you will;

put us to doing, put us to suffering;

let us be employed for you or laid aside for you,

exalted for you or brought low for you;

let us be full, let us be empty;

let us have all things, let us have nothing;

we freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.

And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

you are ours and we are yours.

So be it.

And the covenant which we have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.

May God the creator, the rock of our salvation, who has given us new birth by water and Holy Spirit and forgiven all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, keep us faithful to our calling, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Remember your baptism into Christ Jesus.

Thanks be to God