

St Lawrence's Church, Mereworth
Readings and Prayers for the Baptism of Christ
10 January, 2021



Collect for the Baptism of Christ

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.

Psalm 29

- ¹ Ascribe to the Lord, you powers of heaven, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
² Ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.
³ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders;
the Lord is upon the mighty waters.
⁴ The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation; the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice.
⁵ The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;
⁶ He makes Lebanon skip like a calf and Sirion like a young wild ox.
⁷ The voice of the Lord splits the flash of lightning;
the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
⁸ The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare;
in his temple all cry, 'Glory!'
⁹ The Lord sits enthroned above the water flood;
the Lord sits enthroned as king for evermore.
¹⁰ The Lord shall give strength to his people;
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Acts chapter 19, verses 1 - 7

¹ While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the inland regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. ² He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?' They replied, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' ³ Then he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They answered, 'Into John's baptism.' ⁴ Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.' ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied— ⁷ altogether there were about twelve of them.

Mark chapter 1, verses 4 - 11

⁴ John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ 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. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ 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. ⁸ I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

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Reflection

The photograph at the top of the page is part of the frieze which extends around St Lawrence's church. The frieze repeats three motifs: the central motif is known as the 'Tetragrammaton.' It consists of four Hebrew characters which spell out, 'Yahweh' the Old Testament name for God. For Christians, this symbolises God the Father. To the left is a 'Christogram' - the first three letters of Jesus' name, adapted from the Greek alphabet. Finally, to the right, is a dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit.

So, surrounding us, as we worship in church, we have a permanent reminder of God's presence with us: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Today's gospel reading describes the baptism of Jesus. In it, Father, Son and Holy Spirit were all present. This event has inspired many paintings and, in our minds, perhaps we can imagine that moment, and how it might have appeared to those present.

As Jesus was baptised, the Holy Spirit was visible in the form of a dove, the heavens opened, and the voice of God the Father was heard declaring the Jesus was, indeed, His Son.

This moment was pivotal. It was a public declaration of who this man from Nazareth truly was. Afterwards, Jesus was led by the Spirit from the site of his baptism to the wilderness. Here he prepared for his ministry by fasting, and by wrestling with the temptations of Satan.

Jesus emerged from this period of isolation to embark on his ministry. He healed, taught and continually prayed in communion with his Father.

As we try to follow Jesus in our lives, we should depend on the power of prayer, of communing with God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There may be times when this is easier. For example, we can probably focus on God more easily when we are in church, away from the distractions of our busy lives. However, as the account of Jesus' baptism tells us, God isn't just with us when we are in church. He is with us in the world, and he is calling us to be led by the Spirit to join him in his mission to the world. Wherever we are, we can turn to him: to worship, to seek guidance, or to bring our pain into his healing presence.

Betty Earl

10 January, 2021