

Sermon Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Isaiah 43: 1 – 7 and Luke 3: 15 – 17, 21 – 22

In the Church Lectionary or calendar for today, today is described as the celebration of Christs Baptism. As Christians we are all baptised just the once into Gods Church or family.

John the Baptist was baptising in the River Jordan and preaching about the coming Messiah. So, who was John the Baptist, thus called now to distinguish him from the disciple John? John was the son of Zechariah, a priest in the Temple, and Elizabeth, who was related to Mary, mother of Jesus. John was born to them after an angel appeared to Zechariah while he was on duty in the inner temple, alone, telling him he would have a son to be called John. He did not believe the angel as he said his wife was passed child bearing age. For this he was struck dumb and did not speak until John was born.

When John was born Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and he prophesied in the words of Luke 1 verses 67 to 79; in verses 76 and 77 ‘AND YOU MY CHILD WILL BE CALLED A PROPHET OF THE

MOST HIGH FOR YOU WILL GO BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE THE WAY FOR HIM. TO GIVE HIS PEOPLE THE KNOWLEDGE OF SALVATION THROUGH THE FORGIVENESS OF THEIR SINS.’ To prepare the way for the Lord, which John did by preaching and baptism in the desert. Many at the time thought he was the Christ or Messiah but as we heard in Luke 3, he told the people THAT ONE MORE POWERFUL THAN HIM WOULD COME AND HE WILL BAPTISE YOU WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WITH FIRE.’

Jesus then comes forward to be baptised, we aren’t actually told by John, and we are told how Johns words of someone more powerfull come true there and then by the River Jordan and all the people being baptised. VERSES 21 AND 22 ‘WHEN ALL THE PEOPLE WERE BEING BAPTISED JESUS WAS BAPTISED TOO. AND AS HE WAS PRAYING HEAVEN WAS OPENED AND THE HOLY SPIRIT DESCENDED ON HIM IN BODILY FORM LIKE A DOVE. AND A VOICE CAME FROM HEAVEN YOU ARE MY SON WHOM I LOVE, WITH YOU I AM WELL PLEASED.’ Zechariah’s prophecy came true there and then. In the last week I have read sermon

ideas concentrating on the use of a dove/bird as a deliverer of the Spirit and one on did Jesus need to be baptised, as He was the Son of God.

In the reading from Luke there are two very important words for me, Spirit and Prayer. The baptism is hardly more than a timing device for the coming of the Spirit; in a physical form just like when at Pentecost the disciples felt the Spirit descending and touching them thus starting the Disciples ministry, so the mission of Jesus is marked by the descent of the Spirit upon Him. And, of course the words of God, heard by everyone there at the river.

The Spirit comes on Jesus while Jesus is at prayer. Throughout Jesus's ministry and that of the Disciples Luke tells us there is always prayer before important events. The choice of the disciples, prayer in Gethsemane, the transfiguration on the mountain and the disciples turning to prayer before a mission and before Paul is sent to Antioch, to name just a few.

Prayer and prayer life is so important in our Christian lives. Much has been written about how to pray; put simply prayer, for me, it is a conversation with God which can take place anywhere. However, I

have found discipline and the setting aside of time to pray is vitally important, a time when I can be relaxed and undisturbed. This is a method I have found works for me. When for you will depend upon your day time routine but please find a time to do this because I repeat prayer is such an important part, if not the most important, of our Christian lives and faith. All the examples of prayer in the Bible, both O.T. and N.T. demonstrate how God always listens and achieves solutions in His time. So, whether happy or worried or downcast talk to God and seek His way and comfort!

The baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit descending on Him, and Gods declaration 'YOU ARE MY SON, WHOM I LOVE; WITH YOU I AM WELL PLEASED' marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry on earth, so the stage is set for Jesus to begin His ministry and mission of bringing Gods message to the world and you and me.

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, the voice from Heaven at your baptism assures us that you set out on your mission in the full Spirit and power of your Father. You fill your

followers too with the Spirit. Grant us confidence in that Spirit so that we may respond to your direction through your own Spirit living in us. Amen.