

## 2022 9<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY WORSHIP AT HOME

Dear friends,

Here we are in 2022 – may I wish you a peaceful and happy New year. We know that not all will be what we hope for during the year but we do know that whatever befalls us during that time, Jesus will still be there walking alongside us, always ready to carry us during the bad times and guide us during the good. This week we witness Luke’s account of John offering a baptism of repentance, which Jesus receives. Every blessing to you all, *Margaret*.

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**Call to worship:** ‘You are my children, my beloved, with you I am well pleased.’

Today let us respond to our Father with the offering of our hearts.

As the people came to John with great expectation about the coming Messiah, so do we come to you, O Lord. Quieten us to hear your voice.

Lord, people must have thought it strange that you asked John to baptise you.

We know that sometimes people think we are strange when we follow you.

You were willing to be baptised because that was God’s will – the start of great things to come.

May we be prepared to come to you, entrusting our lives to the one who has done, and will do, great things for us. **Amen.**

**The words to ‘Thou whose almighty word’ written by John Marriott [1780-1825]. Hymns and Psalms 29.**  
***[This hymn can be also be found in Singing the Faith at no. 106 with some language altered. I chose to use the original wording]***

1 Thou whose almighty word  
Chaos and darkness heard,  
And took their flight.  
Hear us, we humbly pray,  
And where the gospel day  
Sheds not its glorious ray  
Let there be light!

2 Thou who didst come to bring  
On thy redeeming wing  
Healing and sight,  
Health to the sick in mind,  
Sight to the inly blind.  
O now to all mankind  
Let there be light!

3 Spirit of truth and love,  
Life-giving holy Dove,  
Speed forth thy flight.  
Move on the water’s face,  
Bearing the lamp of grace,  
And in earth’s darkest place  
Let there be light!

4 Blessed and holy Three,  
Glorious Trinity,  
Wisdom, Love, Might,  
Boundless as ocean’s tide  
Rolling in fullest pride,  
Through the world, far and wide  
Let there be light!

**Prayer:** From the clash and confusion of life, we hear the unexpected call of the Divine. As seekers after truth, treading wilderness paths in a bewildering world, we wade into the waters of your wisdom and immerse ourselves in you, God-with-us. **Amen.**

Jesus, your baptism fills us with wonder.

We marvel that you bowed to John's ministry and humbly accepted baptism at his hands.

We worship and adore you for immersing yourself in the same waters as others – you, who had no need of repentance.

Father, we offer you our adoration for your love of your Son, and of us, your children.

We are filled with awe at the Holy Spirit descending quietly as a dove.

We bow before you, seeking the brushing of her wings on our heads also.

You have opened heaven to us, and our hearts are full.

And yet we know that even though we long to be what you want us to be, we fail so often and we are sorry.

So often our hearts are closed to your voice and we do not hear you in the challenge or the plea of those who call to us in the wilderness of our lives.

Often our eyes are also closed and so we don't see the signs of you all around.

We can be complacent, contrary, and cynical, Lord, neither expecting nor seeking revelations or surprises.

We are sorry, Lord – and beg that you startle us with your grace. Speak your truth to our hearts and descend upon us in the power and gentleness of your Spirit. **Amen**

The Lord in his grace and mercy forgives us and helps us to start again. We thank you, Lord. **Amen.**

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.**

**Isaiah 43: 1,2 &5-7: [The Living Bible, paraphrased.]**

But now the Lord who created you, O Israel, says, 'Do not be afraid for I have ransomed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up – the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, your Saviour, the Holy One. I gave Egypt and Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for your freedom.....

Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will gather you from east and west, north and south. I will bring my sons and daughters back to Israel from the farthest corners of the earth.

All who claim me as their God will come, for I have made them for my glory – I created them.

**Luke 3: 15-17,21-22: [The Bible for Everyone – New Testament translation by Tom Wright]**

The people were very excited, and everyone was questioning in their hearts whether John might not be the Messiah. To all of them John responded: 'I am baptising you with water. But someone is coming who is stronger than I am. I don't deserve to untie his sandal-strap. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. He will have his winnowing fork to hand ready to sort out the mess on his threshing-floor and gather the corn into his barn. Any rubbish he will burn with a fire that will never go out.....

So it happened that, as all the people were being baptised, Jesus too was baptised, and was praying. The heaven was opened, and the holy spirit descended in a bodily form, like a dove, upon him. There came a voice from heaven: 'You are my dear Son. I am delighted with you.'

## **The words to 'All over the world' written by Roy Turner. Mission Praise 18**

1 All over the world the Spirit is moving, all over the world as the prophet said it would be;  
All over the world there's a mighty revelation of the glory of the Lord as the waters over the sea.

2 All over His Church God's Spirit is moving, all over His Church as the prophet said it would be;  
All over His Church there's a mighty revelation of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

3 Right here in this place the Spirit is moving, right here in this place as the prophet said it would be;  
Right here in this place there's a mighty revelation of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.  
[ c 1984 Kingsway's Thankyou Music.]

### **Comment:**

Isaiah reminds us that God has called each one of us by name – he knows us and loves us as individuals – not just part of one large mass of people, but personally as ourselves. He loves us as we are with our own particular set of gifts and peculiarities. God redeems us – again not just as part of an amorphous mass but as ourselves; he answers our personal deepest needs.

It is good to celebrate this on the day when we also celebrate Jesus' baptism for when we are baptised not only do we commit ourselves to Christ but we know that God is calling each of us by name.

In our Gospel passage Luke tells us that this was when God declared his love for Jesus. It is moving because he does this before Jesus has started his ministry – he had not yet embarked on the costly path to the cross – so we see that God the Father loves Jesus for *who* he is and not just because of what he does.

It is now that Jesus' ministry is set in motion – he knows that he is loved by his Father and so he obeys, starting on the road.

At this time John the Baptist was at the height of his powers and the crowd hung on his every word.

Indeed, as yet they had no interest in Jesus – to them he was just another person wanting to be baptised by John. They actually thought that it is John who must be the Chosen One. With all that around him we can appreciate what a man John was – he didn't allow himself to become distracted by the flattering and tempting voices all round him. John was well aware of his calling – and of his limits.

When John baptised Jesus we can see the loving interaction of the Trinity when the love of the Father for the Son was made visible by the Holy Spirit descending like a dove for all to see.

We are called, through these two readings, to hear God say to us, as he says to Jesus, that he loves us and is well pleased with us. There is a resounding joy in the Old Testament reading from Isaiah – and it is what we are promised in Jesus' baptism as he takes up his mission for us. As Isaiah writes, we are created by God for his glory and that is why he chooses to redeem us.

It isn't because we are worthy – it is because he loves us.

### **Prayer:**

Thankful that we are called to be God's people at this time and in this place, we pray for the needs and cares of our church, our community, our nation and our world.

Almighty God, although we may not be able to return to our church building just now, still we pray for the community of believers there – and for all who gather to worship you now, and for those who lead our church in many different ways, laying their gifts at your feet to serve you and their fellow beings.

Lord, give us expectant hearts, looking for signs of your Holy Spirit working among us.

We pray for our country, for this land in which we live – holding before you those who lead our nation and those who protect it. We know that things can always be improved upon and we pray that instead of non-stop criticism of those trying to lead, there may be a coming together of minds only interested in service.

Give us minds that can imagine the kingdom of God coming among us.

We pray for our world – east and west, north and south – bringing before you all those who long for peace – those who live at war with their neighbours – and for those with the power to bring peace to the nations. Give us ears to hear the cry of the oppressed, and lips to speak the words which they cannot.

We remember those who have gone before us from this time and place. Lord, we hold before you the very young and the very old – those who are ill and those who care for them – those who are in the terminal phase of illness and those who watch with them; and we pray for those who are bereaved and who ache with loss.

Give us hands that bring Jesus into the lives of those in need.

Lord in your mercy hear all our prayers for we ask them in the name of your Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

**Amen.**

A Prayer for All Ages [taken from Roots 2016].

We remember all those who are ill today – those in our families, those we know, and those whose names we don't know but who also need our prayers.

God of fire, water, and dove,  
bless them with courage, healing, and love.

We remember those who need special protection, because they are in places of war and violence, or because they are in danger of being hurt or abused.

God of fire, water, and dove,  
bless them with courage, healing, and love.

And we pray for ourselves and for one another;

God of fire, water, and dove – bless us too with courage, healing, and love. **Amen.**

What a wonderful sight it must have been, a dove descending from heaven, and those powerfully beautiful words coming as if from nowhere.

Thank you, Lord, for the times when your Spirit alights on me like a dove, when your goodness overpowers me, your love drenches me, and you fill me with wonder. **Amen.**

### **Meditation of John the Baptist: [by Nick Fawcett]**

Did I imagine them: the voice from heaven – the dove descending from on high?

I might have done, for it was an emotional moment – not just for me but for him too.

He had come down to the Jordan, and I knew at once who he was, something about him speaking unequivocally of God.

He was the Messiah – the one whose way I had been sent to prepare – and I was overwhelmed with the honour, wonder and joy of it all.

*He*, of course, should have baptised *me*, for compared to him I was nothing – but, for all my protestations, he insisted otherwise, resolved to mark the start of his ministry through the waters of baptism.

Was it to honour the Law, perhaps?

To identify himself with human-kind?

Or simply to symbolise the beginning of a new chapter in his life?

I'm not sure – but what I do know is this: that he committed himself that day to the path ahead: to the way of sacrifice, surrender and self-denial that would bring life to the world.

He was ready to serve – to fulfil his calling whatever it took.

And whatever I may or may not have imagined that day, one thing is for sure – God’s hand was upon him, delighting in the courage of this amazing man –His beloved Son.

**Prayer:**

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you that, having committed yourself to the way of the cross, you walked it faithfully to the very end.

Thank you for your courage and devotion – your willingness to give your all.

Help us, in turn, to consecrate ourselves to you and faithfully to follow, honouring your call to discipleship through an ongoing journey of faith. **Amen.**

**The words to ‘When Jesus came to Jordan’ written by Fred Pratt Green[ 1903-2000] StF 233**

1 When Jesus came to Jordan to be baptised by John,  
he did not come for pardon, but as his Father’s Son.  
He came to share repentance with all who mourn their sins,  
to speak the vital sentence with which good news begins.

2 He came to share temptation, our utmost woe and loss,  
for us and our salvation to die upon the cross.  
So when the Dove descended on him, the Son of Man,  
the hidden years had ended, the age of grace began.

3 Come, Holy Spirit, aid us to keep the vows we make;  
this very day invade us, and every bondage break.  
Come, give our lives direction, the gift we covet most;  
to share the resurrection that leads to Pentecost.

**Closing Prayer and Blessing:**

Holy Spirit, go with us into the world.

Resource us with your power and your presence.

Father God, help us to know your love,  
and that we are your beloved sons and daughters.

Lord Jesus Christ, help us to learn from you,  
and to follow your example,

that we may share your light and love with everyone we meet. **Amen**

And may the blessing of God – the Father who created us – the Son who found us and saved us – and the Holy Spirit who lives and works within us – be with us and all whom we love this day and for evermore.

**Amen.**