

2026 01 11 WORSHIP AT HOME

Dear friends,

Today we consider the baptism of Jesus by John - and John's uncertainty as to whether he should do this. What wisdom within Jesus led him to seek affirmation for the journey – the mission – on which he was about to embark? His baptism also showed his solidarity with sinful humanity, even as he is proclaimed the Son of God.

I hope that you feel refreshed after the Christmas season and ready to step on out into the New Year to see what we are called to be and to do in 2026. As ever, I wish you all that you might wish for yourselves – and hope that every blessing may come your way. Margaret.

Call to worship:

Loving God, you call us to be your people – you make us and fill us with your Spirit for you are our breath, you are our life. life.

Loving God, you call us to be your people – to journey for the sake of love and to find, at every step, that we are full of you for you are our breath, you are our life.

Loving God, you call us to see your glory in creation – your inspiration in our work – and your love in our lives for you are our breath, you are our life.

Loving God, you call us to be your people. Refresh us and rebuild us and renew us wherever we are as we offer you thanks and praise – for you are our breath, you are our life.

The words to 'We have a gospel to proclaim' written by Edward Joseph Burns [b.1938] StF 418

1 We have a gospel to proclaim, good news for all throughout the earth;
the gospel of a Saviour's name: we sing his glory, tell his worth.

2 Tell of his birth at Bethlehem – not in a royal house or hall,
but in a stable dark and dim, the Word made flesh, a light for all.

3 Tell of his death at Calvary: hated by those he came to save,
in lonely suffering on the cross, for all he loved his life he gave.

4 Tell of that glorious Easter morn: empty the tomb, for he was free.
He broke the power of death and hell that we might share his victory.

5 Tell of his reign at God's right hand, by all creation glorified.
He sends his spirit on his Church, to live for him, the Lamb who died.

6 Now we rejoice to name him King: Jesus is Lord of all the earth.
This gospel message we proclaim: we sing his glory, tell his worth.

Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Our God takes us by the hand. Give thanks then – for we are beloved.

God's glory is in all things: in the heavens and on the earth.

God's glory is in the seas and in all the creatures of the earth.

In all the wonders of the earth we see the power of God.

God's glory is in the promise of the kingdom in righteousness and justice.

God's glory is in peace between people; in differences enjoyed and cherished.

God's glory shines in the hearts and minds of all who love God.
God's glory shines in Jesus Christ, living in our midst.
God's glory shines in human intellect and talent, in human love and understanding.
Our God takes us by the hand – give thanks then for we are beloved.
Blessed be God for ever. Amen.

Loving Lord, at every turn we falter.
You made us to fill the earth with righteousness – but we forget justice.
You made us to be faithful – but we deny you.
You made us to be a reconciliation to enemies – but we are not merciful.
Forgive us our blindness and narrowness and give us grace to let your forgiveness change us, so that we may truly live as your beloved children. Amen.

God, who will not break the bruised reed, be near us now.
God, who cherishes the dimly burning light, be near us now.
In our busyness still us and fill us with your peace.
In our self-absorption, still us and will us into quietness and rest.
In our heaviness and our hardness, as we bind our burdens to ourselves, still us – free us – will us to let go of all that keeps you from the centre of our lives.
In our darkness and our fear, still us – free us – let us see ourselves as you see us.
Fill us with the certainty of our belovedness,
Fill us with your loving Spirit.
Fill us with such love, such life, that we are overwhelmed.
O God, who showed the power of powerlessness upon the cross, make us powerless to resist your call.
Refresh us – renew us – then use us in your service. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and 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.

Matthew 3: 13-17 – taken from The Holy Bible – ERV version. Copyright 2006 by World Bible Translation Center, Inc. and used by permission.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River. He came to John, wanting John to baptise him. But John tried to stop him. John said: 'Why do you come to me to be baptised? I should be baptised by you!'

Jesus answered: 'Let it be this way for now. We should do whatever God says is right.' Then John agreed.

So Jesus was baptised. As soon as he came up out of the water, the sky opened, and he saw God's Spirit coming down on him like a dove. A voice from heaven said: 'This is my Son, the one I love and in whom I am well pleased.'

Comment: Matthew's account of Jesus' baptism seems to pay more attention to the discussion preceding the baptism than to the baptism itself. This is a difficult story for all the gospel writers, and

this story is paralleled in mark1: 9-11, Luke 3: 21-22. And John 1: 31-34. The baptism of John is for repentance so how is this to be fitted to one who is believed to be sinless? That it is included even with its embarrassment is an argument for its authenticity.

Matthew shows how John argues that Jesus should not be baptised and how Jesus challenges him on the basis of righteousness.

Righteousness here is not about being right, but about doing what God wants – the obedience of Jesus to his will. This is to be a major theme in Matthew’s writing, and is connected deeply with acting in accordance with God’s saving, compassionate purpose. In baptism, along with others who are responding to John’s teaching about the true way to be the people of God, Jesus is identifying himself with the people and also demonstrating a continuity with Old Testament history.

The coming of the Spirit at Christ’s baptism echoes the action of the Spirit sweeping over the waters of creation in Genesis 1:2, and the dove in Genesis8: 9-11, marking the end of the flood and the beginning of a new creation. Here the dove, indicating the Spirit, shows a new creation present in Jesus. The Spirit remains an active presence in Jesus’ life, and its descent here is an indication of the equipping that is to characterise Jesus’ ministry, dependent on his Father’s power in addition to being the agent of God’s renewal. There is a powerful, if unarticulated, trinitarian theology to be seen here. The words appear, in Matthew’s account, to be heard by everybody, unlike the accounts in Mark and Luke.

The term ‘beloved’ is not a term of endearment, but of intention and approval, using words from Psalm2:7 and from Isaiah 42: 1. The title Son is multi-layered in its use throughout the Gospel, drawing together many strands of Jewish teaching and prophecy.

In the baptism, Jesus is shown as the meeting place of heaven and earth – of the divine and the human. His identity as the Messiah, the Son, the Saviour and the agent of the Father’s renewing is affirmed.

Meditation of John the Baptist – taken from A Most Amazing Man year A – by Nick Fawcett.

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I was speechless at first, my react ion a mixture of horror and disbelief, for how could I, John, possibly baptise God’s chosen One – the Lamb sent to redeem the world?

It was preposterous, and I very nearly refused, desperate somehow to prevent him.

Surely *I* should have been asking *him*, for I was unworthy even to loosen the thong of his sandals, to walk the same ground, let alone do more.

But he insisted, refusing to take no for an answer – so eventually I relented and did what he asked.

I’m still puzzled though, for I baptised as a sign of repentance – of turning from sin – and what had that to do with Jesus? What faults had he to confess?

It was *we* who needed cleansing, a fresh start, changed lives – *we* who time and again went astray.

Yet here he was, entering the water, almost as if he could take *our* sin upon himself.

Could it be?

I know he came to bring forgiveness – but to identify with us, to carry our load, to stand before God in our place – surely not even *he* would do that!

.....

Lord Jesus Christ, we marvel at your love – at the fact that you did not simply offer words of guidance or instructions as to how we should live, but instead identified yourself with us fully, sharing our human vulnerability and weakness yet remaining without sin.

And though you withstood temptation to the very end, you took upon yourself the punishment that is rightfully ours, cancelling out our sins upon the cross.

Help us in response to that awesome commitment to show at least a little of the same in return, consecrating our lives to you in joyful service and reverent praise. Amen.

Prayer:

Today we have seen God affirm Jesus in baptism. He wants everyone to know that this is his Son. We are not always good at seeing people's true worth and praising them for it – neither is our society. In our prayers today, we remember those whom society does not affirm.

Lord, help us to help them.

We pray for the unemployed – for people who can't remember when they last worked – for the many who have lost the will to work.

Lord, help us to help them.

We pray for the homeless, that they might be kept safe, and receive help, support and encouragement to begin happier and fulfilled lives.

Lord, help us to help them.

We pray for people who use alcohol or drugs to fix their problems, or at least to disguise them.

We pray for the people who help either informally, like street angels, or formally, in hostels and refuges.

Lord, help us to help them.

We pray for the people we encounter in our daily lives, that we may see God in them, and act accordingly.

Lord, help us to help them. Amen.

Close:

'This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased.'

We are your people, whom you love. Send us out now to live in a way which pleases you and reflects your glory all around. Amen.

God of all friendship – help us this week to make life worthwhile for others.

Inspire us to treat people fairly and equally.

And as we celebrate the humility of Jesus in coming to John for baptism, may we, through our knowledge of the way of Christ, reach out to others and let them reach out to us in mutual dignity. Amen.

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