

Sunday Reflections

January 12th 2025 The Baptism of Christ



An Acclamation for the Season

All: Alleluia, alleluia. This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased. Alleluia, alleluia!

Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's
holy word, to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

*The sun of righteousness has dawned with healing in his wings. Let us come to the light of Christ,
confessing our sins in penitence and faith.*

All: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to
you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us
our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his
kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. **Amen.**

The opening prayer

All: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

The Psalmody Psalm 29 *We say the psalm aloud*

Ascribe to the Lord, you powers of heaven, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders; the Lord is upon the mighty waters.

The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation; the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice.

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf and Sirion like a young wild ox.

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.

The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare; in his temple all cry, 'Glory!'

The Lord sits enthroned above the water flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king for evermore.

The Lord shall give strength to his people; the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Scripture Reading Isaiah 43.1-7

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. ³For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. ⁴Because you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. ⁵Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; ⁶I will say to the north, 'Give them up', and to the south, 'Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth — ⁷everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.'

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gloria

All: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

²¹ Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day

The first 39 chapters of Isaiah are very different from today's. They contain record and statement after statement of how Israel has fallen from their calling and are to be judged; and they will be found wanting! But Israel is the beloved and God will not turn away and so we hear today of his salvation, through water and fire. They will not be destroyed, they will be refined, purified and redeemed, for God will not abandon them. The love of God will pay a hefty ransom to buy the people back from the nations and bring them home!

God restores Israel once more to their vocation by becoming himself the servant who would give his life as the 'ransom for the many'. This is God's constant nature, love that will not let his beloved people, his beloved creation – humanity go! Though Israel stumbles again and again, though each and every one of us falls day in and out God's grace filled verdict is not consuming fire, but a redeeming blaze which burns, yet never destroys, which refines and glorifies such that as we emerge from the waters we hear His declaration – 'this is my beloved, with whom I am well pleased'.

Many ask why Jesus was baptized; even John the Baptist quizzed him as he entered the water. Jesus suggests he does this act in solidarity with all the people who have come the waters in repentance. We see in this act Jesus' calling revealed, to offer himself up as God's ransom; the one oblation of himself once offered a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. It is no coincidence that John is Baptizing at the Jordon River. Whilst passing through the Red Sea had been the way out of captivity for Israel, it is through crossing the Jordon, fording the river, that Israel enters into a land in which to dwell within the blessings of God, the fullness of life with God promised of old. Jesus takes the journey with the people, the words of Isaiah are fulfilled – God will be with his people as they go through the waters; more so show the way through them.

John's suggestion of Jesus baptizing with water and then something more, with the fire of the Spirit, shows His baptism is more than ritual cleansing it is a full and complete refining – with Holy fire. Jesus shows the way to us and calls us to enter the waters and to follow him. But there is more, Jesus is also 'the way' back for the repentant, back into the fullness of a place of dwelling with God - Jesus is 'the way' through the offering of himself as the ransom.

Isaiah reveals to the people that God indeed knows our actions fall short and we are unable of our own will and energy to get ourselves back to His place of dwelling; for it takes more than water to make us clean. The way 'home' is promised and will cost God dearly, the sending of the Son who will become the once and for all perfect oblation and satisfaction. He is able to see us through the waters into the 'dwelling place of promise'

and refine us through the Holy fire of His Spirit. And thus we pray 'O God make clean our hearts within us and take not thy holy Spirit from us.'

The Creed

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Prayers *We make our intercessions*

You have called us into the family of those who are the children of God.
May our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ be strengthened by your grace.
Jesus, Lord of the Church, in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be a temple where the Holy Spirit can dwell.
Give us clean hands and pure hearts so that our lives will reflect your holiness.
Jesus, Lord of the Church, in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be a light to the world, so that those in darkness come to you.
May our lives shine as a witness to the saving grace you have given for all.
Jesus, Lord of the Church, in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be members of your body, so that when one suffers, all suffer together.
We ask for your comfort and healing power to bring hope to those in distress.
Jesus, Lord of the Church, in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be the Bride, where you, Lord, are the Bridegroom.
Prepare us for the wedding feast, where we will be united with you for ever.
Jesus, Lord of the Church, in your mercy hear us.

Jesus, Lord of the Church, you have called us into fellowship with all your saints.
We unite our prayers with theirs and ask for grace to serve you with joy where you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for all eternity. Amen.

The Collect

All: 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. **Amen.**

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: 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.

The Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me;
Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen.