

Sunday Reflections

January 11th 2026 The Baptism of Christ



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 Acts 10.34-43

Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷ That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

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.

The Gospel

Matthew 3.13-17

When Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom 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 account of Jesus' baptism is found in all four gospels; John makes reference to it rather than giving the full narrative as Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is therefore a significant event that we, in every age, are to take note of and reflect on.

Before we ask about 'why' Jesus was baptised and what it meant then and may mean now the first thing we have to ask is, 'where on earth did John get the idea of baptism from'?

Baptism as we know it, whereby in part we become part of the family of faith in Christ, for the male Jew this had been, ever since Abraham, through circumcision. Later, at the start of adulthood there is Bar Mitzvah. A few suggestions have been made on where John may have got the idea from.

First is the Jewish ritual cleansing by immersion in a 'mikveh', or ritual bath. A ritual form of purification practised by the time of John and Jesus. But these were not a one-time cleansing, but repeated when necessary.

Second, the Essenes at Qumran participated in frequent ritual washings as a means of purification, even though they were living in the desert where water supply was extremely limited.

Later, after Jesus' time the practice of ritual cleansing at the point of conversion by gentiles to Judaism is noted.

John's baptism was indeed a baptism for repentance, for purification and it may well be his version of the rituals undertaken in Israel. But his is steeped in extra meaning as he completes his works at the Jordan river; the entry point of Israel, delivered from the wilderness years after escape from slavery in Egypt, into the land promised for their dwelling by God.

John's baptism then gave a chance for repentance, for purification and a 'new beginning', stepping forth into the promises of God, the provision of God and especially into a community of faith in relationship with God. When Jesus comes to the river John declares everything is back to front in the moment, Jesus does not need to repent he does not need purification, if anything John should be baptised by Jesus. 'For now', says Jesus let this be so that everything for righteousness is fulfilled'.

At first sight we might think of 'righteousness' in terms of moral uprightness; which would fit with purification. But the inference is that Jesus is without sin (as His resurrection attests to). Here the Old Testament understanding of 'righteousness' would fit better as being about relationship with God. Abraham "believed the LORD, and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness". Abraham was righteous because he trusted God, not because he was morally perfect. Human righteousness entails being put in a right relationship before God, as Habakkuk states, "The righteous live by their faith".

God's righteousness, then, is expressed in his covenantal faithfulness. And, as Jesus exits the water and the Spirit alights on him and a voice declares 'this is my Son with whom I am pleased', such an understanding of righteousness fits perfectly.

There is more, apart from being God's agent of salvation, Jesus was at the same time the Davidic King and representative of the Jews before God. Here is a statement about the Messiah, and big one to boot. As David is anointed king whilst Saul sat on the throne, so Jesus is declared king even though Herod and Caesar sit on their thrones. King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

Cornelius, to whom Peter had been sent and on whom he had seen anointed with the Spirit knew all about the kings of the earth. As a centurion he had sworn an oath of obedience to Caesar, but now he bends his knee to the Lord of Lords and is baptised in a manner more akin to a rite of purification but through which his being a part of the community of faith and being 'righteous' before God through Christ is affirmed.

Jesus stepped into his 'commission' as Messiah from the moment he came out of the waters. So too, are each and all of us who have been baptised by water and the Spirit. We are called to enter into the righteousness of relationship with God in Christ and with a 'moral uprightness' with the world about us.

And more, as like the people at the Jordan, we too must respond to God's voice in awe and in gratitude, giving Jesus the worship worthy of his divine status, and the heartfelt thanks for his humility and faithful obedience to his Father.

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.