

The Benefice of Malpas & Threapwood & Bickerton
The First Sunday of Epiphany
Sunday 10th January 2021
The Baptism of Christ



The Collect

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

Prayer

Lord of all time and eternity,
you opened the heavens and revealed yourself as Father
in the baptism of Jesus your beloved Son:
by the power of your Spirit
complete the heavenly work of our rebirth
through the waters of the new creation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Acts 19: 1-7

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the inland regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. ²He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?' They replied, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' ³Then he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They answered, 'Into John's baptism.' ⁴Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.' ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied— ⁷altogether there were about twelve of them.



Gospel Reading: Mark 1: 4-11

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Reflection from the Rector

The Gospel reading opens with John appeared in the wilderness, which can also be taken as meeting people in the wilderness of this world temptations preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. His message was clear and could not be misunderstood and yet some thought him to be the Christ. He protested “I baptise with water but one is coming who is mightier than I ,the thongs of his sandals I am not worthy to untie”. Bishop Michael Baughen once stated that John decreased in order that Jesus might increase and that is to be the hallmark of our discipleship as well in that we proclaim not ourselves but Christ crucified, as St Paul was to say. Jesus baptism was not only an outward sign but also the God moment for Jesus himself ,he needed to be assured that he was on the right track and that he had His Fathers approval and blessing and so his continued presence with him as he set out in ministry. He had other special God moments in the hectic activity that was ministry but the time on the Mount of Transfiguration which came at the end of ministry as Jesus headed to Jerusalem explains the need for the moment with His heavenly Father in that just he needed time aside for personal reassurance in the outset so he needed it as he faced passion and death which was the final battle with Satan that had been with him throughout the ministry.

I don't recall my own baptism and sometimes I feel envious of those who do but then I do recall that day of my confirmation in Stockport when I was 11.I wasn't terribly aware of what I was doing at one level when I knelt before the bishop and he laid his hands on my head with those words “ Confirm O Lord this your servant with your Holy Spirit”. I was though aware that this was a beginning and as long as I saw what followed, as a journey, and an adventure, then I could learn something on route. I did and do and did when I knelt before the then Bishop of Chester to be made deacon and then ordained priest. You will each have your own special God moments which are to be treasured and can be points to which again and again one can draw strength from.

The Christian life is about growing in holiness. And how do we do that. In prayer, in study of Gods word, in sacrament, in fellowship with other Christians

Prayer is the Christians vital breath as the hymn has it. Prayer is silence as well as putting voice to God in petition for others and ourselves. Prayer is on our own and also corporate . It is something of the whole people of God that is this world and the next and the two are linked.

Study of God’s word is vital that we may see Gods plan for His people through the ages and become part of it ourselves as we seek to absorb its teaching and live by its guidance and be enlivened by its challenge as much as strengthened by its comfort

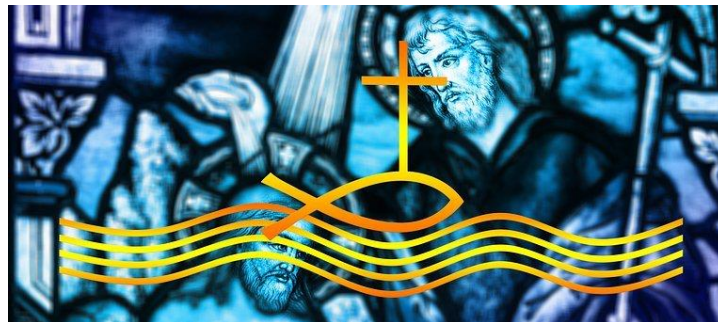
which disturbs as well as comforts

Sacrament is for me the meeting place between heaven and earth and also the food that the pilgrim needs as we journey on. The body broken and the blood spilt is the way in which we receive afresh the Lord who in His death gave himself for us.

Fellowship with our fellow Christians is part of being family and baptism unites us and the worldwide family shares a common life together and with people of all Christian traditions.

Let us then rejoice in new beginnings claiming the assurance of Our Lords presence with us as we journey on now and always.

With greetings to you all from The Rector and Revd Helen



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