

# The First Sunday of Epiphany

## The Baptism of Christ

12<sup>th</sup> January 2025



In the name of the + Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen

### HYMN

1 Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,  
Dawn on our darkness and lend us Thine aid;  
Star of the East, the horizon adorning,  
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

2 Cold on His cradle the dewdrops are shining;  
Low lies His head with the beasts of the stall;  
Angels adore Him in slumber reclining,  
Maker and Monarch and Saviour of all

3 Say, shall we yield Him, in costly devotion,  
Odours of Edom and offerings divine?  
Gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,  
Myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine

4 Vainly we offer each ample oblation,  
Vainly with gifts would His favour secure;  
Richer by far is the heart's adoration,  
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

### Introduction to confession

Because God was merciful,  
he saved us through the water of rebirth  
and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit.  
But through sin we have fallen away from our baptism.  
Let us return to the Lord and renew our faith in his promises  
by confessing our sins in penitence

Lord Jesus, you are mighty God and Prince of peace:  
Lord, have mercy.  
Lord Jesus, you are Son of God and Son of Mary:  
Christ, have mercy.  
Lord Jesus, you are Word made flesh  
and splendour of the Father:  
Lord, have mercy.

Bright star of love,  
guide us to where we can see Christ;  
In the worship of your church  
and in the unexpected places of your world.  
Where there is darkness may we shine with your light,  
that all may see your saving grace  
and together we may offer you the gift of our lives  
May the God of all healing and forgiveness  
draw you to himself and cleanse you from all your sins,  
that you may behold the glory of his Son,  
the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Absolution

## The Collect for the First Sunday of Epiphany

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

### A Reading from The Old Testament Isaiah 43 1-7

#### Israel's Only Savior

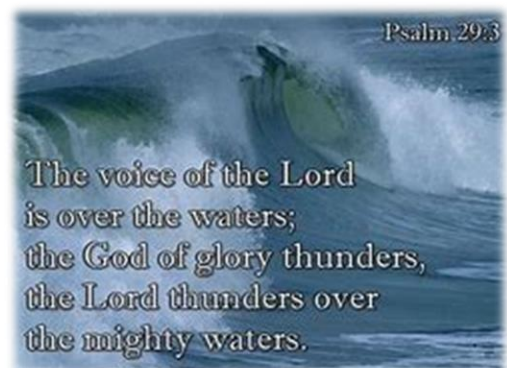
43 But now, this is what the Lord says—  
he who created you, Jacob,  
he who formed you, Israel:  
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.  
2 When you pass through the waters,  
I will be with you;  
and when you pass through the rivers,  
they will not sweep over you.  
When you walk through the fire,  
you will not be burned;  
the flames will not set you ablaze.  
3 For I am the Lord your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;  
I give Egypt for your ransom,  
Cush and Seba in your stead.

4 Since you are precious and honored in my  
sight,  
and because I love you,  
I will give people in exchange for you,  
nations in exchange for your life.  
5 Do not be afraid, for I am with you;  
I will bring your children from the east  
and gather you from the west.  
6 I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’  
and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’  
Bring my sons from afar  
and my daughters from the ends of the  
earth—  
7 everyone who is called by my name,  
whom I created for my glory,  
whom I formed and made.”

This is the word of the Lord  
Thanks be to God

<sup>1</sup> Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.  
<sup>2</sup> Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name;  
worship the LORD in holy splendour.  
<sup>3</sup> The voice of the LORD is over the waters;  
the God of glory thunders,  
the LORD, over mighty waters.  
<sup>4</sup> The voice of the LORD is powerful;  
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.  
<sup>5</sup> The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;  
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.  
<sup>6</sup> He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,  
and Sirion like a young wild ox.

### Psalm 29



<sup>7</sup>The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.

<sup>8</sup>The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;  
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

<sup>9</sup>The voice of the LORD causes the oaks to whirl,  
and strips the forest bare;  
and in his temple all say, "Glory!"

<sup>10</sup>The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;  
the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.

<sup>11</sup>May the LORD give strength to his people!  
May the LORD bless his people with peace!

**A Reading from the New Testament**  
**Acts 8 14-17**

<sup>14</sup> When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. <sup>15</sup> When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, <sup>16</sup> because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

This is the word of the Lord  
Thanks be to God

**HYMN**

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 o'er the water's face  
Bearing the lamp of grace,  
And, in earth's darkest place,  
Let there be light!

4 Blessèd 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!

**The Gospel**

Alleluia, alleluia.

This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.

Alleluia

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke 3. 15-17, 21-22

Glory be to thee O Lord

<sup>4</sup> John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup> And 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. <sup>6</sup> Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup> He 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. <sup>8</sup> I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” <sup>9</sup> In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup> And 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. <sup>11</sup> And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord  
Praise to thee, O Christ

## Reflection

Why, did Jesus come for baptism? John the Baptist’s, message was a call to “...a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” and the scripture teaches us in several places that Jesus was without sin

For Jesus this is a **moment of transition**. Prior to this event are the hidden years working in Nazareth, living with his family. From this moment he never returns to the carpenter’s bench and we are told in all three gospels that he is driven out into the wilderness to prepare for his ministry.

It was a **moment of approval**. Luke records the words “*You are my beloved son in whom I am well pleased*” The voice of the Father is heard. The church has regarded this event as the first manifestation of the Trinity which is why it is placed within the season of Epiphany as another ‘manifestation’.

It was a moment of equipping. The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus symbolised by a dove, an image not chosen by accident. Doves in scripture are symbols of peace, innocence and sacrifice. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, “the Holy Spirit will come upon you” the angel says to Mary; the Holy Spirit was already present in his life. But in this moment the Holy Spirit comes upon him for the purpose of his ministry.

It was a moment of identification. Jesus visibly identified himself with us in his baptism. Although he was like us in all things yet without sin, in his humanity he understands our struggles and joys. He is able to sympathise with us. How might we understand this?

### The Baptism of Christ – a parable

The queue along the riverbank now stretched back into the tree line as people slowly made their way towards the water. There was not much talking as they shuffled along; each person had their own story, their own regret and sorrow for the past, and a desire for change. John’s words rang in their ears; “Come and get ready – wash the past away – something is coming soon, something wonderful!”

As they joined the queue, they had to pass a little hut where they were given a number of labels – a bit like post-stick notes – which they had to stick on themselves. ‘Cheat’, liar, selfish, bad temper, murderer, thief, adulterer, gossip etc. etc. No one got past without a handful and it just made things worse to see how many you were given.

But the man in the hut was puzzled by the next person who joined the queue. Although he hunted for this man’s labels but could find none, he shrugged his shoulders, surely there must be something?

Bewildered, he watched as the man began to pull the labels off the person in front of him and stick them on himself. He moved down the queue to the next person and the next and the next taking all their labels each time.

By the time he reached the river he was quite covered from head to foot. He waded into the water...

John stared hard and beneath the labels recognised his cousin Jesus. "Why do you come to me?" he asks but already he is beginning to understand. As he pours the water over Jesus, and as he falls back into the river, the labels drop away. He rises to stand, a voice from heaven is heard; "You are my Son, the beloved, with you I am well pleased."

At Christmas we celebrate a child- Jesus; God coming among us. At his baptism Jesus begins his public work and in the act of baptism, prefigures the purpose for his coming.

Is the river muck still stuck with my sins?  
Have sunken stones fossilised my offence?  
Did my Lord descend with such a shameful load  
and lodge it in the Jordan river bed?  
Is this His solemn hour drawing close?  
He rises from the stream with sudden breath.

*Rita Simmonds*

This only picks up one aspect of Jesus baptism, but perhaps it helps us understand other scriptures which tells us that Jesus was 'made sin', identified with sin in his death on the cross. As if in that moment all that is broken, twisted, evil and destructive is focussed into one point and dealt with.

Which helps us understand our own forgiveness. It is not so much our individual offences and failings, small or great that are forgiven but the whole principle of sin. Sin which separates us from a holy God is dealt with by God and a Way opened for us to become forgiven children of God.

#### **The Nicene Creed**

We believe in one God,

the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God, begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,

the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

Jesus calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light.  
Washed clean by the waters of baptism,  
let us pray that we may live the life to which he has called us.

Lord Jesus, eternal Word,  
proclaimed as the Christ by John the forerunner,  
hear us as we pray for all who proclaim your word.

Lord Jesus, baptizing with the Spirit and with fire,  
strengthen us to withstand all the trials of our faith.  
Lord of truth,

Lord Jesus, bringing forgiveness to all who repent,  
teach your Church dependence on your grace

Lord Jesus, fulfilment of the promises of old,  
give hope to all who suffer or are ignored.  
We remember those known to us in need at this time.

Lord Jesus, beloved Son of the Father,  
anoint us with the gifts of your Holy Spirit.

Lord Jesus, bringer of hope,  
share with all the faithful the riches of eternal life  
We commit those who have died into your encompassing love.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
in you the Father makes us and all things new.  
Transform the poverty of our nature  
by the riches of your grace,  
and in the renewal of our lives  
make known your heavenly glory.  
Amen.

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:  
Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours now and for ever.  
Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit,  
who came upon the beloved Son  
at his baptism in the river Jordan,  
pour out his gifts on you  
who have come to the waters of new birth.  
and the blessing of God,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you  
and remain with you always Amen.

## HYMN

1. O love, how deep, how broad, how high!  
How passing thought and fantasy,  
that God, the Son of God, should take  
our mortal form for mortals' sake!
2. For us baptized, for us he bore  
his holy fast and hungered sore;  
for us temptations sharp he knew,  
for us the tempter overthrew.
3. For us to wicked men betrayed,  
scourged, mocked, in crown of thorns arrayed;  
for us he bore the cross's death,  
for us at length gave up his breath.
4. For us he rose from death again,  
for us he went on high to reign;  
for us he sent his Spirit here  
to guide, to strengthen, and to cheer.

5 All honour, laud, and glory be,  
O Jesus, virgin-born, to thee;  
whom with the Father we adore,  
and Holy Ghost, forevermore