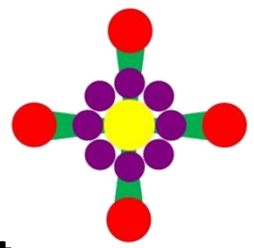


**The Benefice of
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme
Sunday 10 January 2021 The Baptism of Christ**



Liz Moy leads our Liturgy today

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe.

**From the rising of the sun to its setting
your name is proclaimed in all the world.**

Grant us, Lord, who behold your glory,
to drink from the waters of the new creation
flowing from the river of life at your baptism.
Give us the wings of the Spirit,
that we may hasten to meet you at your coming,
and praise you, with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever. **Amen.**

Prayers of Penitence

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.

**Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
and against one another, in thought, and word, and deed.
We are truly sorry for our pride,
and for our lack of faith, of understanding and of love.
We repent of our narrow-mindedness,
of our bitterness and our prejudices.
Pardon and forgive us, save us and renew us,
that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

May the God of love
Bring us back to himself,
Forgive us our sins
And assure us of his eternal love
In Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect

Heavenly Father,
at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son:
may we recognize him as our Lord
and know ourselves to be your beloved children;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

First Reading: Acts 19:1-7

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He 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." Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism." Paul 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." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied - altogether there were about twelve of them.

Thanks be to God for the gift of His word

Gospel reading: Mark 1: 4-11

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

Thanks be to God for the gift of His Word

Reflection from Mavis Nevill

I was always glad that when the reordering of St Saviour's was planned, the Baptism Font continued to be positioned at the back of church, adjacent to the entrance. This is the traditional placing for fonts, as a sign that the sacrament of Baptism is the beginning of our journey of faith.

Baptism speaks of a washing clean from that which is worldly and which would drag us down, that which is sin and sinful. This is true, whether our parents and Godparents initially made the faith commitment for us, or whether we came to faith as an adult.

Thus washed, the baptised Christian is free to live a "new life" in Christ Jesus; to have a new beginning.

This ritual cleansing from sin and the sinful, was also part of Jewish religious rites and was a requirement for those who converted to the Jewish faith. It was also part of the Temple tradition and it is believed that the Temple, in Jesus's time, had four ritual baths for this purpose.

The Jews thus had an established ritual for repentance and cleansing. Then John bursts onto the scene, in his strange prophetic garb and his hell fire preaching. Large crowds who went out to listen to him, did repent and were baptised in the River Jordan. We can see that would have been a direct challenge to the religious authorities in Jerusalem, even before they heard a word of his condemnation of the powers that be.

However, even though many of John's hearers did indeed commit themselves to make a new start, we may well ask, "but why did Jesus go to John the Baptist to be baptised by him?"

St Matthew's Gospel account of this story has John the Baptist asking Jesus that same question. "Why do you come to be baptised by me?" He asked that question because, of all those hundreds who flocked to the River Jordan, to be

baptised by him, when it came to Jesus's turn, he recognised that this man was different. He discerned that this man might well be the promised Messiah he had been preaching about. This might be the one whose sandals he would not feel fit to undo, and who would be one who would baptise, not with water, but with the Holy Spirit.

It is Jesus's answer that is interesting for us, as one translation puts it; "I've come because it is the right thing to do." Jesus's answer to John's reveals something very profound about his character. Obviously Jesus believed that submitting to John's Baptism was what God wanted of him.

It is interesting, that as Baptism is the beginning of our Christian journey, so Jesus's Baptism, by John, marked the beginning of his ministry. It the time when Jesus leaves his life as a carpenter and builder of Nazareth behind, and dedicates himself entirely to his ministry of teaching and healing - working for the coming of God's Kingdom.

Jesus's baptism served another purpose. John the Baptist identified his mission, as preparing the way for the one who would come after him. The one who would not baptise his followers with water, but rather with the Holy Spirit of God. John had also been given an inner assurance that he would recognise who that was, when he baptised him.

So the baptism of Jesus was a setting of the stage. A marker post of a new thing that was happening. Jesus came to preach that the Kingdom of God is here!

Our baptism is also a marker of something new breaking in. We are baptised in response to the command of Jesus, to his disciples, after the resurrection, that they should go into all the world, spreading the Good News, and baptising converts into the Kingdom of God.

In our own baptisms we are initiated as members of that Kingdom, we are identified as sons and daughters of God. We are also anointed with the Holy Spirit by the act of baptism.

Let us praise God for the knowledge that we are God's children. It is the most precious truth of Christianity. Let us also praise God that we have been drenched in God's Holy Spirit at our baptism, and we can experience the truth of this in ever deepening ways.

In this further period of Covid lockdown, at a time when our contact with others is extremely limited, we need, more than ever, the knowledge, that God is with us. We also need to be alert to the gentle whispers of the Holy Spirit, as to ways we can spread the knowledge of the Kingdom and the joy that knowledge gives us, in these difficult days. So many folk are feeling lonely, frightened and unloved at this time. We need to seek real wisdom as a church, and as individuals, as to ways to respond to that need.

Jesus submitted to being baptised, because he thought it was the right thing to do. We need to use these difficult times to attune the ears of our hearts to, what is the right thing for us to do.

May God bless us all at this time.

Affirmation of faith

Let us affirm our faith

Do you believe and trust in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ?

**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.**

Do you believe and trust in the Holy Spirit?

**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.**

A prayer for the Corona Virus situation

Merciful Father, we continue to pray for those throughout the world who are affected by the pandemic, for the many who are ill with the virus at this time and for their anxious families and friends.

We pray for the doctors, nurses and all medical staff being pushed to their physical and mental limits.

We thank you Lord that with the start of vaccination, a beacon of hope has been lit in the darkness of despair - even if we can't yet see it in the gloom of the alarming spread of the virus and the resultant lockdown.

We pray that the vaccine may have the hoped-for effect in slowing the transmission of the virus so that we may begin to know, once again, the joy of meeting our families and friends.

(A moment of quiet)

Lord in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer.

Eternal Lord, the same yesterday, today and forever:

As we begin this New Year, we ask for your help in forgetting the mistakes of the past as we face the challenges of the present, and in renewing our sense of hope for the future.

(A moment of quiet)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Loving God, we hold the needs of our sisters and brothers as dearly as our own needs. Help us to love you with all our hearts and with all our souls and with all our minds and to love our neighbours as ourselves. We offer our thanksgivings and our petitions on behalf of the church in our benefice and throughout the world. We pray for our Benefice Ministry Team as they work to keep us together as a worshipping community in this time of restrictions. We pray for the worldwide church, that it will continue to be a steadfast place of love and encouragement to all who are in any of kind need.

(A moment of quiet)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Lord, you are the beginning and the source of all things. Teach us to have respect for your amazing creation. We pray for all who are involved in caring for our planet, for ecologists, conservationists, for farmers and fishermen, for all

who seek to work with your creation in supplying us with our needs. Father, we face so many changes in this coming year now we have left the European Union, and we pray for all those whose lives are directly affected by those changes.

(A moment of quiet)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Loving God, we thank you for the lovely environment in which we live. We pray for all the people in our villages. May we as your Church demonstrate your love, grace and peace to our neighbours. We pray for the pupils, teachers and staff of our village schools as they educate the children in difficult circumstances. We pray for our shopkeepers and all who serve the community.

(A moment of quiet)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

God of healing, we pray for all who bear the burdens of pain, anxiety and depression. We pray that they may have an awareness of your presence and an understanding that you are bearing those burdens with them. We pray for those whose treatment has been delayed due to the current pandemic and that they will receive treatment soon. May we be a source of comfort to them in your name.

In a moment of quiet, we pray for all those known to us who need your healing presence at this time.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Merciful God, your Son Jesus was moved to tears at the grave of Lazarus his friend. We pray for loved ones who have passed to your eternal light. Look with compassion on those bereaved and grieving at the loss of loved ones. Give to them comfort in your abiding love.

In a moment of quiet let us each bring before God any known to us who are grieving at this time.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

A Covenant Prayer for the New Year:

**I am no longer my own, but yours,
put me to what you will, put me to doing, put me to suffering,
let me be employed by you, or laid aside for you,
let me be full, let me be empty,**

let me have all things, let me have nothing;
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
You are mine and I am Yours,
So be it,
And the covenant now made on earth,
Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

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.

The Father's voice bears witness to the Son.
God has revealed himself to us.

The Son bows his head beneath the waters of baptism.
God has revealed himself to us.

The Spirit as a dove descends from heaven.
God has revealed himself to us.

Submitting to John's baptism, Christ delivers us from bondage.
God has revealed himself to us.

Blessing

May God, who in Christ gives us a spring of water
welling up to eternal life, perfect in you the image of his glory;
and the blessing of God almighty the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Sending Out

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.