

A couple of notices from Bridget

1) In the light of the most recent lockdown restrictions it has been agreed by both PCCs to suspend services in our Benefice churches for the duration of the stated government lockdown period.

Alternative zoom services will be announced and links circulated in addition to continuing the weekly Service of Reflection.

2) At present both All Saints Kirkbymoorside and Edstone churches are still open for private prayer on Wednesday and Sunday.

REFLECTIVE SERVICE: FOR WORSHIP IN ISOLATION THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

As we meet together in spirit through these words of praise, may we think of and pray for each other sharing this reflection and for those meeting and worshipping in church.

We come from scattered lives to meet with God. Let us recognise God's presence with us now.

Keep a short silence, still your heart. You may like to light a candle

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples, 'I am with you always'. Be with us today, as we offer ourselves to you. Hear our prayers for others and for ourselves and keep us in your care.

Amen.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in us the fire of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

In the light of Jesus, let us examine ourselves and confess our sins.

Keep a short silence. Confession:

Most merciful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we confess that we have sinned in thought, word and deed. We have not loved you with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. In your mercy forgive what we have been, help us to amend what we are, and direct what we shall be; that we may do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen.

Absolution:

May God have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and strengthen us to live in the power of the Spirit all our days. Amen.

Collect for the Baptism of Christ

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.

Read a passage from the Bible

Mark 1.4-11

⁴ John the baptiser appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ 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. ⁸ I have baptised you with water; but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Spend a few moments in silence thinking about the passage and ask God to speak to you through his scriptures

Reflection

We are in the season of Epiphany. It isn't just one day but a period where we contemplate God breaking through our blinkered concepts of the way things are and shifting our understanding of who and what is important.

We talk about having an 'epiphany' but what is needed for an epiphany?

Last week we looked at the Magi, who come with humility and wonder.

Today Jesus is baptised and the heavens are 'torn apart.'

Next week Jesus calls Nathaniel out of his narrow way of seeing.

The next week, the wedding at Cana, Jesus demonstrates God's outpouring generosity.

The week after Jesus heals and teaches with authority.

After that Jesus stills a storm.

All of these are moments where there is a change in direction. It is no longer just us sending out prayers and supplications but God's intimate involvement *with* us. It is a series of profound moments of understanding; people understanding and God identifying with us. These are written so that we can begin to grasp that there is always a two-way traffic between heaven and earth, that we are not abandoned and God's desire is to be known in every moment of existence.

Jesus receives John's baptism for repentance. He has no need to repent but he chooses to be with us, as us, for us. And this is the astonishing, wonderful thing; that moment of Jesus' simple tender submission to the deepest human need to repent and be restored is what breaks heaven open and lets us hear God's joyous shout of affirmation 'YES!' *This is what I mean, this is what I'm like, with you, for you, beside you! This is my Son, the Beloved.*

As we begin another lockdown slog I can imagine that many of us have experienced a real struggle to keep going. 'Not again.' I can hear you say. The difficulty of everyday existence is real and quite depressing frankly. So, I want to offer some joy. The joy of God. The joy of a loving God loving to be with us. He *chooses us*, willingly, happily, and we see it most clearly in the presence of Jesus getting alongside people, teaching, healing, enjoying our company.

When we can't enjoy each other's company hold on to this. God can and does. There is no moment of the day when He would not choose to be in our company, despite what we may think about ourselves.

May we all find joyous epiphany moments in the weeks ahead.
Amen.

We affirm our faith in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

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.

We intercede for others in the quiet of our hearts.

Lord, meet us in the silence

And hear our prayer.

Silence for prayer is kept: Pray for yourself in your isolation, that you would know God is with you. Pray for others in their loneliness. Pray for our country. Pray for the world.

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.

Silence is kept

O gracious and holy Father, give us wisdom to perceive you, diligence to seek you, patience to wait for you, eyes to behold you, a heart to meditate upon you, and a life to proclaim you, through the power of the spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us bless the Lord

Thanks be to God.

“For God has said, ‘I will not leave you or forsake you’ so we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear’.” (*Hebrews 13:5-6*)

“It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not be dismayed.” (*Deuteronomy 31:8*)

Please God, we can all meet together in church again, soon.