

**Readings:** *Isaiah 40:1 – 5, 9 – 11; Psalm 103(104):1 – 4, 24 – 30; Titus 2:11 – 14; 3:4 – 7;*  
*Luke 3:15,16,21,22.*

The first two verses of today's Gospel Reading provide a link with the account we heard in Advent of the ministry of John the Baptist. He came *proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*. This led people *to think that John might be the Messiah*. So he points away from himself to someone stronger than himself. Luke then separates the ministry of John from that of Jesus. He jumps ahead to tell us that King Herod *shut John up in prison*, and in today's reading does not describe John baptizing Jesus. Instead he tells us what happened after the baptism. Just as he will when he describes the Transfiguration and at other points in the story, he tells us that Jesus was praying. Then three things happen: *Heaven opened; The Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily shape like a dove: And a voice came from heaven*. We are given an insight into the prayer- relationship between Jesus and his Father. He is God's Son, and in the passages which follow we shall learn what this means. Today's reading is followed first by a list which traces the ancestry of Jesus (not merely through David to Abraham, as in Matthew but) to *Adam, son of God* (Chapter 3:21 – 38). Then comes the account of the testing in the desert (4: 1 – 13, which we do not hear until the first Sunday of Lent), and then the opening of the prophetic ministry of Jesus with his sermon in the Nazareth synagogue (4: 14 – 30, which we hear on the third and fourth Sundays of ordinary time).

Together chapters three and four provide a second 'Introduction' to Luke's Gospel, which, like the first – in chapters one and two – seeks to tell the reader who Jesus is and what is to be his role. But today's Feast makes a further use of the Baptism of the Lord. Traditionally this event is the second of three which together make up the Epiphany or Revelation of the glory of Christ. We have already celebrated the first of these – the visit of the magi; next Sunday we shall hear of the third – the sign at the wedding feast in Cana. Each of these is an epiphany – a showing forth of the otherwise hidden truth about Jesus as the Son of God sent to be our Saviour.,

This point is made clearly in the reading from the letter to Titus: *God's grace has been revealed* (the Greek word is 'epihanized') *and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race*.