



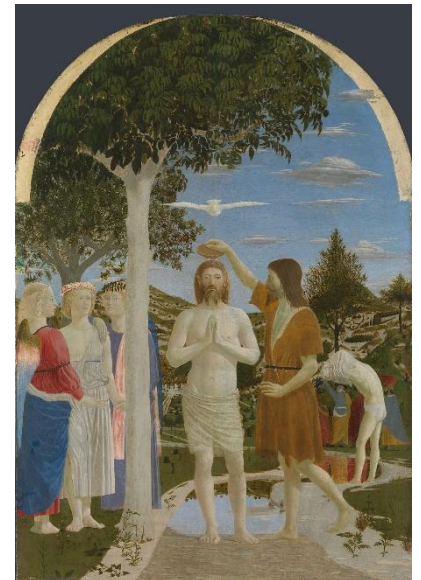
Living churches at the heart of their communities...

St Giles', Durham, St Cuthbert's, Shadforth and St Mary's, Sherburn

**Sunday 10 January 2021
Baptism of Christ**

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



Bible Readings

Genesis 1. 1-5

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Psalms 29

Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name;
worship the Lord in holy splendour.

The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the Lord, over mighty waters.
The voice of the Lord is powerful;
the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars;
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.
He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.

The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames
of fire.
The voice of the Lord shakes the
wilderness;
the Lord shakes the wilderness of
Kadesh.

The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to
whirl,
and strips the forest bare;
and in his temple all say, 'Glory!'

The Lord sits enthroned over the flood;
the Lord sits enthroned as king for
ever.
May the Lord give strength to his people!
May the Lord bless his people with
peace!

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.'

Notices

In the light of this week's new lockdown measures and following advice from our Bishops there will, inevitably, be some changes to services in the coming weeks. Regrettably, for the time being there will be no services at either St Cuthbert's or St Mary's. As far as possible, we will continue to hold a Eucharist at St Giles at 11.00am on Sundays but this will remain under constant review.

In addition, we will continue to Zoom services as follows:

- Sundays 11.00am: Eucharist/Service of the Word
- Sundays 6.00pm: Evening Prayer
- Wednesdays 10.00am: Morning Prayer

If you would like to be added to our email list, please contact us at stgileschurchdurham@live.co.uk

A Reflection

I think we sometimes forget that the gospels were written to be shared and read aloud and, in Mark, the narrator wants us to be caught up in the action and the energy of Jesus' ministry. Mark tells his story with unrelenting vividness and pace, expressed in vocabulary which implies a sense of urgency. It is a narrative of action rather than discourse and he definitely has a story to tell!



The few verses which precede our passage for reflection this week, are the words which open Mark's gospel account: "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." There is no preamble, no introduction. Jesus arrived on the scene as an adult and was baptised by John.

Mark refers to John's ministry of "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" and we know that great numbers of followers went to John at the Jordan. And it is a challenge for us to understand why Jesus, who we know was without sin, chose to share such a baptism.

It can be the subject of deep theological discourse and intellectual debate, but I do believe that we can also find a simple message to take away with us.

In the very first sentence of Mark's gospel, he proclaims Jesus to be "the Son of God", but he also wants us to understand, right from the beginning, that Jesus was also the Son of Man. Jesus was fully human as we are and lived life as we do. So, in his baptism, Jesus was joining and affirming John's ministry of calling God's people to repentance, to seek forgiveness and to be prepared to start the work of the building of God's kingdom.

But again, Mark wanted to be absolutely certain that we understand that Jesus is Son of God, as he recorded the affirmation of the "Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice from heaven, Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased."

John called all God's people to readiness and then Jesus began his work. It was to be a ministry of sharing the gifts of divinity with the needs of humanity. Here was the Son of God and here was the Son of Man.

In the space of a few verses, the scene is set and Mark is ready to move us on to the next part of the narrative. Mark wants us to be impressed and awed by Jesus' God-given power, with all its potential for hope, healing and fullness of life.

Mark uses John's ministry at the Jordan to urge us to follow Jesus as Lord, to work for the coming of the kingdom by serving others in his name. Through a shared baptism, we are all part of that story.

It seems just a short time ago that we were celebrating the joys of Christmas and Epiphany, and we are perhaps reluctant to leave the peaceful scene of Nativity. But as we begin a New Year, we take those blessings with us as we go out into the world. What an exciting resolution it would be, to prepare ourselves to join in the work of sharing the good news, and ready to play our part in the story of the gospel! Amen.

Rowena Ashworth