

The Five Alive with Bishampton and Throckmorton Praying Together on a Sunday

Sunday 10th January 2021 – The Baptism of Christ

*You may like to light a candle as a visible symbol of Jesus
being present with you.*

The Lord is with us.

Blessed are you, Sovereign God,
our light and our salvation,
to you be glory and praise for ever.
You gave your Christ as a light to the nations,
and through the anointing of the Spirit
you established us as a royal priesthood.
As you call us into your marvellous light,
may our lives bear witness to your truth
and our lips never cease to proclaim your praise.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit:
Blessed be God for ever.

That this evening may be holy, good and peaceful,
let us pray with one heart and mind.

Keep a moment of quiet

As our evening prayer rises before you, O God,
so may your mercy come down upon us to cleanse our hearts
and set us free to sing your praise now and for ever.
Amen.

Canticle:

**Above you the Holy One arises,
and above you God's glory appears.**

- 1 Arise, shine out, for your light has come,
the glory of the Lord is rising upon you.
- 2 Though night still covers the earth,
and darkness the peoples;
- 3 Above you the Holy One arises,
and above you God's glory appears.
- 4 The nations will come to your light,
and kings to your dawning brightness.
- 5 Your gates will lie open continually,
shut neither by day nor by night.
- 6 The sound of violence shall be heard no longer in your land,
or ruin and devastation within your borders.
- 7 You will call your walls, Salvation,
and your gates, Praise.
- 8 No more will the sun give you daylight,
nor moonlight shine upon you;
- 9 But the Lord will be your everlasting light,
your God will be your splendour.
- 10 For you shall be called the city of God,
the dwelling of the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 60.1-3, 11a, 18, 19, 14b

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever.
Amen.**

**Above you the Holy One arises,
and above you God's glory appears.**

Reading: 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.

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.'

Reflection

Last week our focus was on the astrologers – those mysterious men who looked up to the skies to study stars, and then looked down to the manger to see the face of God, smiling up at them.

Still Man's search of the skies goes on. Still Man is learning of what exists beyond our own planet, and still Man marvels at discoveries which both science and faith attempt to explain.

My knowledge of astrology is exceedingly poor, though on doing a little research for this reflection, I begin to understand why some have such a fascination for the study of the cosmos. Just two stories the BBC reported on last month, show me how vast is the universe. It is a scale beyond most people's imagination.

The first story was of Australian scientists who had mapped a million new galaxies using an advanced telescope in the desert. In just 300 hours they had created a "new atlas of the universe" showing unprecedented detail and the mapping of in total, 3 million galaxies. The second story also described the magnitude of space, that "even the closest stars are trillions of kilometres away through space".

The physics is beyond what an average person can comprehend. Science and religion will always be in debate about the creation of all this matter, but what of the reason for its' creation?

"In the beginning when God created" the bible begins. God was before anything was created. Before any matter in the vast space we call Space", WAS God. Do you ever have a mind's picture of that – God before any substance was created? Before heaven and earth, and when all was a dark

and formless void? God was there – and by His Spirit (the NRSV says a “wind”. The King James Version says “the Spirit of God”) moved, and then, God said “Let there be light”.

God acts – movement first, and then God speaks light and life into existence. The Spirit of God creates day and night, sky, earth, seas, and all living creatures. God’s Spirit had the power to create light out of darkness and from the waters of chaos, all kind of life which God saw as good. God loved the world into being.

Creation was not to show God all powerful like some proud builder of principalities. It was not for God’s own self-gratification, but because God who is love, loved all things into being, and even suffers at the hands of those He creates.

The God who “*created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it*” (Isaiah 42: 5) – “the Creator of the cosmos is one who, surprisingly and maybe even shockingly, gives Himself to and for the world, paying particular attention to those who have become victims of that world”. (Freedom is Coming by Nick Baines).

God’s love brings light and through the power of His Spirit brings life. That same Spirit is at work at the very start of Jesus’ own ministry. There is that moment when Jesus is plunged into water, when he could not hear anything but his own heart beat. He then sees God act through the Spirit descending like a dove, and he hears just one voice “You are my Son, the Beloved”. One voice speaks above the cacophony of voices from the crowd gathered around John the Baptist, and that one voice speaks of God’s love as Jesus emerges from the waters. The Spirit sends and goes with Jesus forward into his ministry among all people.

If we read the Epistle for today, we will hear about Paul through whom the Spirit, by the laying on of hands, equips them to do God’s work.

In all these accounts, the Spirit of God acts to bring life out of darkness, from watery chaos, for equipping the mission of God, to heal and to bring hope to those whom He loved into being and with whom shares in their suffering.

In these times of darkness and fear, chaos and feelings of powerlessness, God IS there, and by His Spirit we see His work being accomplished.

This is God – the One who has the imagination and the power to create the magnitude of the cosmos, and who has the compassion to care and act for the one individual.

Keep a moment of quiet to reflect before praying

Prayers

Offered by John Allsop

Let the Spirit of God in our hearts plead for the Church and for the world.

Great God of all time and space,
fill the Church with such joy and believing
that all Christians overflow with love,
compassion, generosity and humility.
Let us walk your way and live your life.

May the Spirit of God: fill us to overflowing.

Great God of power and justice,
fill the arenas of leadership and conflict
with sharpened consciences and with courage,
so that wise decisions are made,
needs met and wrongs righted.

May the Spirit of God: fill us to overflowing.

Great God of gentleness and truth,
fill every home with new insight
and greater understanding.
Break down the divisive barriers
and build up our capacity to love.

May the Spirit of God: fill us to overflowing.

Great God of attentive caring,
fill us with your practical compassion;
may all who suffer be heard,
comforted and cared for.
Heal both their situation and our hardness of heart.

In this time of pandemic, Lord, keep all your people
under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we all may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us
from your love.

May the Spirit of God: fill us to overflowing.

Great god of unending being,
fill death with your life
and the dying with hope in you.
Prepare us all for life which lasts for ever.

May the Spirit of God: fill us to overflowing.

Great God of all creation,
fill our mouths with praises
and our hearts with gratitude for all the glory that surrounds us.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Pause

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 our Lord.

Amen.

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.

Hymn

Eternal Ruler of the ceaseless round
of circling planets singing on their way;
guide of the nations from the night profound
into the glory of the perfect day;
rule in our hearts, that we may ever be
guided and strengthened and upheld by thee.

We are of thee, the children of thy love,
by virtue of thy well-belovèd Son;
descend, O Holy Spirit, like a dove,
into our hearts, that we may be as one:
as one with thee, to whom we ever tend;
as one with him, our Brother and our Friend.

We would be one in hatred of all wrong,
one in our love of all things sweet and fair,
one with joy that breaketh into song,
one with the grief that trembles into prayer.
one in the pow'r that makes thy children free
to follow truth, and thus to follow thee.

O clothe us with thy heav'nly armour,
Lord, thy trusty shield, thy sword of love divine;
our inspiration be thy constant word;
we ask no victories that are not thine:
give or withhold, let pain or pleasure be;
enough to know that we are serving thee.

John White Chadwick (1840 – 1904)

God our Father,
your Word has come among us
in the Holy Child of Bethlehem:
may the light of faith illumine our hearts
and shine in our words and deeds;
through him who is Christ the Lord.
Amen.