

Surprisingly, St John does not give us any report of the baptism of Jesus. It's all second-hand. The only comment we have is verses thirty-two and -three from this morning's passage, where John the Baptist states, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on Him. I myself did not know Him, but the One who sent me to baptise with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the One who baptises with the Holy Spirit'." John the Baptist prophesies about Jesus between the Prologue and this morning's passage, but there's no actual reporting about Jesus' own baptism.

Whatever the reporting or lack of in the gospels, there is one clear issue about the baptism of Jesus. His baptism is the only point in all four gospels where we see the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—evident all at once: Jesus is present in the river Jordan, the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus like a dove, and God speaks.

This morning's passage from St John's gospel is in two parts and in the Bible both parts begin with the words, "The next day". We haven't got these words at the beginning in this morning's reading—the gospel book has trimmed it out, but it's important because when we get to the wedding at Cana of Galilee in chapter two, it begins

"On the third day". There's an implication, here, with reference to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and His Passion, and the three-day cycle here in John's gospel.

On the first of these two days, John the Baptist reveals Jesus to his own disciples. Jesus comes toward John and John says, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." John goes further and says that Jesus is the One of whom John said, "After me comes a man who is ahead of me because He was before me." John is pointing out that Jesus is ahead of him because Jesus is the One sent from God who takes away the sin of the world and therefore is greater than John the Baptist. Also, Jesus is before John because He was in the beginning with God before all time began, as we hear in St John's Prologue. John the Baptist completes the first of the two sections of this passage by saying, "And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." John has declared this in the passage between the Prologue and this morning's reading.

The second of these two days also begins with "The Next Day". This section shows us John the Baptist with two of his disciples and John is pointing out Jesus again, saying, "Look, here is the Lamb of God." John was so clear about what he knew because of what he had seen and been promised; the sign of the Spirit matched the message of

the Spirit. This is the beginning of Jesus calling His disciples. John's two disciples follow Jesus when they hear that He is the Lamb of God. Jesus turns and sees them following and says, "What do you want?" They reply with a question of their own, "Where are you staying?"

A strange question for them to ask. What does it matter where Jesus is staying? However, when someone wants to become a disciple, that person wants to be where the leader is constantly, so the question is quite legitimate: "Tell us where you are staying so that we can come and be with you." Presumably, they have no idea how Jesus can be the Lamb of God; they know about the offering of lambs in penitence, but understanding Jesus as a Lamb is another issue. All is revealed, of course, as their discipleship progresses through the gospels.

Jesus responds to their question Where are you staying? by saying, "Come and see." The two disciples come and see, and stay with Him that afternoon. We understand that Andrew is one of the two disciples. He brings his brother Simon with him, the other one of the two, saying "We have found the Messiah." Jesus looks at Simon and says, "You are Simon, son of John. You are to be called Cephas", which means Peter.

This is where our gospel passage finishes for this morning. Jesus calls more disciples before the end of the gospel's first chapter, but we can explore the scene where Andrew

and Simon, now called Peter, have come to be with Jesus and to stay with Him—'stay', here, meaning ultimately to be with Jesus constantly rather than simply for the afternoon.

Where are you staying?—Come and see. A wonderful response because the word 'see' in this context means to come and experience a new awareness. It's the same as when we say, "Ah, now I see," In other words, now I understand. In Jesus' response, He is offering Andrew and Peter the chance to grasp how He is the Messiah and therefore in what sense He is the Lamb of God.

I am leading jointly with the Leeds Lutheran pastor a Discerners' group—young people who are discerning whether they truly sense a call from God to Holy Orders and how that call might manifest itself. We have seven members, some from the Church of England and some from the Lutheran Church. Fr Marc has joined the group, not because he is still trying to discern a sense of calling to Holy Orders—I think the horse has bolted on that one—but to share his experience of growing into his own calling as a newly-ordained deacon and how we might sense a calling manifested in life. The members bring questions for which they want a response and we respond accordingly. They're enthusiastic about their enquiries and we respond enthusiastically.

There is a sense, here, where in initiating this group, we have asked the question, “What are you looking for?” The discerners have said, “Where are you staying?” and we as the two leaders have replied, “Come and see.” Their seeing will be the feelings they get from listening and talking. They have come to stay with us because they know that our experience will move them towards their ultimate goal—or away from it, which can be equally valid.

How, then, does all this affect us? We’re here in church as often as we’re able to come, because God has asked us, “What are you looking for?” We haven’t said, “Where are you staying?” in so many words, but by being in our parish church regularly, we’ve come to stay spiritually with Christ as His disciples because this is where we know we can be with Him—and more importantly, this is where we can be at one with Him, united in the gift of His body and blood in the Blessed Sacrament. As a result of all this, we have “come to see” what Jesus can offer us for the fulfilment of our lives.

Having become disciples of Jesus and dwelling with Him in our lives, the ultimate extent of that discipleship is to take the word of Jesus into our community. Over drinks with Fr Marc on Tuesday evening last after the Contemplative Mass, we talked about some folk in our parish who take that word into the Ilkley community

constantly and without fear of rebuttal or retribution. More power to them.

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is not easy, but the longer we come and stay with Jesus the more convinced we become of the grace with which He adorns our lives and the fulfilment which that grace brings for us as our Lord’s free and loving gift.

In the name of the + Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.