



THE BRAMERTON GROUP

Thurton Benefice

Sunday 10th January 2021

The Baptism of Christ

The 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.

Old Testament Reading: Genesis 1:1-5

Six Days of Creation and the Sabbath

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.

New Testament Reading: Acts 19:1-7

Paul in Ephesus

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the inland regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?' They replied, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' Then he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They answered, 'Into John's baptism.' Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied— altogether there were about twelve of them.

Gospel 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.'

The Baptism of Jesus

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.'

Thought for the Day



There are moments in history when an event occurs that changes the world forever. We may not recognise its significance at the time, but when we look back we realise that afterwards, things were never quite the same again. The baptism of Christ is one of these moments. It was a point of profound change not only for Jesus and John the Baptist, but for the whole world.

We know very little about Jesus' life before his baptism. We catch a glimpse of him in the temple as a young boy, but otherwise we know nothing of how he prepared himself for his ministry. Perhaps he was working or studying, or even spending his time in prayerful solitude. We will never know, but what we can safely say is that from his baptism onwards everything changed. He ceased to be a private citizen moving from anonymity to being public property. His future was to be surrounded by people, whether he wanted to be or not, and to lead and teach. His past existence was gone and his new life began.

The event also brought profound change for John the Baptist. His destiny to prepare the way was fulfilled. John's life was publicly mapped out for him before he was even born. His part in the story of Jesus had been prophesied by Isaiah and by his own father. Our first encounter with him finds him doing exactly what was foretold, creating a people of God, through a shared baptism, making them ready to receive their Messiah. When Jesus appeared, John's job was to baptise him and bear witness to his appearance and that was all. There was nothing beyond that point.

This meant that as Jesus came into the foreground so John moved into the background. John himself said, 'he must increase and I must decrease'. He even sent his own disciples to follow Jesus, becoming a lonely figure just as Jesus became the focal point.

What did this mean for the people of God? It meant a changing of the guard, a new era coming in. John seemed to be part of the old order, belonging more to the Old Testament than the New. He wore clothes made of camel hair, lived in the wilderness and ate locusts and honey. He was every inch an old-style prophet - even his approach to teaching was a complete contrast to Jesus. John had a mission with urgency. He had no idea when Jesus would come so he needed to get his message across quickly. John went straight to the

point and didn't pull his punches. He speaks with insistence, even desperation. Listening to the stories and parables of Jesus after the fieriness of John must have been quite a contrast. John was the last of the prophets and the last association with the old Israel which had to give way to the new age of God. A God of action fulfilled through Jesus. The beginning of Christianity as we know it today.

Both John and Jesus knew their lives would change and even if they didn't know when those changes would occur, they accepted them with obedience and humility because God was with them as he is with us. We all experience change in our lives all the time, both good and bad. Although the last 10 months have been particularly challenging for most of us and have brought about changes we could never have anticipated, God is our constant guide.

It is likely we will look back on these times as a point when the world changed forever, although at this moment it is hard to say what that change will be. When we have grieved for all those that we have lost, let us hope it will be seen as a marker of renewal, when we began to appreciate each other and to see the gifts we have been given with new eyes and a newly rekindled faith.

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