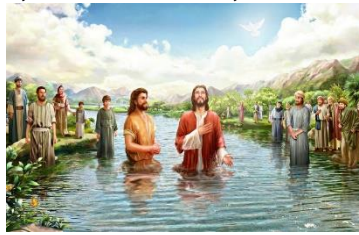


Berrow with Pendock, Eldersfield, Birtsmorton and Hollybush



Baptism of Christ

Welcome-do have a candle, glass of juice/wine and cracker/piece of bread ready

HYMN

OPENING PRAYER

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all
and also with you.

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open, all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Christ the light of the world has come to dispel the darkness of our hearts. In his light let us examine ourselves and confess our sins.

THE CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us
all that is past and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name. Amen.**

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Almighty God,
 who forgives all who truly repent,
 have mercy upon you,
 pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
 confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
 and keep you in life eternal;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

THE GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

**Glory to God in the highest,
 and peace to his people on earth.**

**Lord God, heavenly King,
 almighty God and Father,
 we worship you, we give you thanks,
 we praise you for your glory.
 Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
 Lord God, Lamb of God,
 you take away the sin of the world:
 have mercy on us;
 you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
 receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,
 you alone are the Lord,
 you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
 with the Holy Spirit,
 in the glory of God the Father.
 Amen.**

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.

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READINGS : Acts 19. 1-7, Mark 1.4-11

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

(Please read Ephesians Genesis 1. 1-5 at home)

REFLECTION

Today we consider the baptism of Jesus, baptized as he was by his cousin John in the River Jordan. John's baptism itself is a bit of a puzzle. The Jews had looked forward to the coming of Messiah, there was a sense that the messianic age would come with God's purifying judgment; when promises such as the one in Ezekiel, 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness' would be fulfilled. And certainly, John the Baptist stands in the line of the prophets. Maybe that was the underlying reason for baptism then.

Whatever the case, this action is absolutely daring and radical. When Mark's Gospel describes the Baptism of Jesus, it's a radical act that he seems to have in mind. Mark writes that as Jesus "was coming out of the water, he saw the heavens **torn apart** and a dove descending."

His word for 'torn apart' is *schizo*, and it means "to cleave, to cleave asunder, to rend." Quite a violent word. Mark seems to understand very clearly that in Jesus, God has torn open the heavens and come down. God's active interest in us clearly shown.

John, the prophet in the wilderness, not very far from Jerusalem itself, administers a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins – a serious challenge-for it was only in the Temple, through priesthood and sacrifice, that atonement could be made. Moreover, to tell those within the covenant that they were dirty and needed washing struck at the root of all that they believed. It was the Gentiles who were dirty; tax collectors and sinners were dirty; but not the people of Temple and Law - they were clean. Not so, says John, as if he knew that a New Temple was about to appear, a temple of flesh and blood. 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world'. This is strong stuff indeed.

But we have to be clear. John's baptism was limited. It was preparatory; it was concerned solely with cleansing and forgiveness. It was pointing forward.

Jesus submits to the baptism of repentance as a sign of his messianic vocation to bring reconciliation between God and humanity, thus identifying himself with us in our sinfulness, in our need, though he himself was without sin - but in addition there is the descent of the Holy Spirit and the voice proclaiming divine Sonship: 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased'.

The forgiveness of sins; the gift of the Spirit, the bestowing of a dignity as a beloved Son of God. All of these come to us through Christian baptism. We are washed, we are filled with the Spirit, and God says to each of us - because of my one and only Son - therefore, you also are my beloved son, you also are my beloved daughter.

Baptism means that God has broken through into our lives; and so we, in turn, are called to address the challenges and problems of the world with everything we've been given. It's a summons to be part of the remarkable, redemptive work of God. To give our lives to something more challenging and enduring than any other kind of work.

And that's wonderful enough; that's the good news, the gospel for today. But reflection on Christian baptism in the New Testament doesn't stop there; image upon image is associated with it: for example, being born again - a new spiritual birth from above, being brought from darkness into light or being illumined; being clothed with Christ, and even more radically in Paul, being united with Christ in such a mystical way that his death becomes our death, his burial becomes our burial, his rising again becomes our rising again; in other words, Christ's story becomes our story so that we are re-constituted in him, joined by faith and baptism, to those saving events that bring us to salvation.

Now this is strong imagery indeed. Forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, a magnificent dignity as sons and daughters of God, new birth, from darkness to light, and union with Christ's death and resurrection.

You see, if John's baptism pointed forward to the in-breaking of the kingdom, then Christian baptism celebrates our incorporation into the new age, into the new world.

So baptism for Paul, and the consciousness of being baptized, means that we are provoked - daily - to live as those who belong to the new age - 'Shall we continue in sin? - No, in baptism you died to sin - so that as Christ was raised from the dead, so you too should walk in newness of life.'

Does this provoke us to walk in newness of life?

If we receive the child as a baby, we adopt them as a baby. And so it is with God. God wants us to be baptized or adopted. We baptize for good Biblical reasons. But for many, infant baptism occurs less frequently in many families, even those brought up in the Christian church.

In his baptism, Jesus was declared to be the Son of God, the only Son of God. "This is my beloved Son." But in our baptism, you and I become the *adopted* sons and daughters of God. We too are declared to be children of God. Our relationship with God is transformed in baptism. Through our baptism, there is a new familiarity, closeness and intimacy with God.

Baptism is the fantastic invitation from God to know us intimately and closely, so closely that we are called son or daughter, that we become family. We are closely connected to God, so close that we are now called a child, a son, a daughter, in whom God delights. We are family with God.

God looks down at you and me and says, "This is my beloved son, this is my beloved daughter in whom my soul delights." No matter what our age may be, this is God's fundamental attitude towards us is this: delight. God delights in us, as a parent delights in a child.

When Jesus was baptized, *the Spirit of God* came down upon him. This Spirit was the very presence of God. This was the same Spirit that was present in creation, when God created the world. In the book of Genesis, it says, "The Spirit of God was hovering above the waters." The Spirit was brooding above the waters, ready to create life in those waters. Then, that same creative Spirit that was present in the creation story came on the prophets.

In our baptism, the same Spirit lives in our hearts and in the hearts of our community. We too are filled with the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit found in the creation, the same spirit found in the prophets.

This same Holy Spirit gives you and me power and gentleness to meet our daily challenges. When the Spirit is inside of you and the people around you, there is power, spiritual power and spiritual gentleness, and that is power indeed. We have been given the Spirit of holiness; 'You are my beloved son, you are my beloved daughter'. And so let it inspire us to work and pray for the Kingdom. And let it be a sign, a reminder, a celebration, that in Christ the old age is passing away - the new age, the new world is

here - and we were enlisted and commissioned in our baptism to be agents of it, until the Kingdom of God comes in fullness and Christ is all in all.

How can we live up to the promise of our baptism; to live courageously and joyfully? **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Please ask for any additional prayers

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

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Gathering our prayers and praises into one,
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour taught us.

**Our Father,
which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done ;
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil;
for thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

THE PEACE

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.
He is Christ the Saviour and his name shall be called 'The Prince of Peace'. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end.

The peace of the Lord be always with you
and also with you.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth.
 I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the Virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried;
 he descended to the dead.
 On the third day he rose again;
 he ascended into heaven,
 he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
 and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
 I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy catholic Church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting.
 Amen.

THE OFFERTORY PRAYER

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation:
 through your goodness we have this bread to set before you,
 which earth has given and human hands have made.
 It will become for us the bread of life.
Blessed be God for ever.

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,
 through your goodness
 we have this wine to set before you,
 fruit of the vine and work of human hands.
 It will become for us the cup of salvation.
Blessed be God for ever.

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

Here is the table set for a special meal.

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere, mighty creator,
ever-living God.

We give you thanks and praise for your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ,

who for love of our fallen race humbled himself,
was born of the Virgin Mary by the power of your Spirit, and lived as one
of us.

In this mystery of the Word made flesh
you have caused his light to shine in our hearts,
to give knowledge of your glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

In him we see our God made visible
and so are caught up in the love of the God we cannot see.

Therefore with all the angels of heaven
we lift our voices to proclaim the glory of your name
and sing our joyful hymn of praise:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Father of all, we give you thanks for every gift that comes from heaven.

To the darkness Jesus came as your light.

With signs of faith and words of hope
he touched untouchables with love
and washed the guilty clean.

The crowds came out to see your Son,
yet at the end they turned on him.

On the night he was betrayed
 he came to table with his friends
 to celebrate the freedom of your people.
 Jesus blessed you, Father, for the food;
 he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and said:
 This is my body, given for you all.

Jesus then gave thanks for the wine;
 he took the cup, gave it and said:
 This is my blood, shed for you all for the forgiveness of sins.
 Do this in remembrance of me.

Therefore, Father, with this bread and this cup
 we celebrate the cross
 on which he died to set us free.
 Defying death he rose again
 and is alive with you to plead for us and all the world.

Send your Spirit on us now that by these gifts we may feed on Christ
 with opened eyes and hearts on fire.

May we and all who share this food
 offer ourselves to live for you
 and be welcomed at your feast in heaven where all creation worships
 you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit:
**Blessing and honour and glory and power
 be yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.
Therefore let us keep the feast

(consume)

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

Lord of all time and eternity, you opened the heavens and revealed
 yourself as Father
 in the baptism of Jesus your beloved Son:
 by the power of your Spirit
 complete the heavenly work of our rebirth
 through the waters of the new creation;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

We thank you, Lord, that you have fed us in this physical and spiritual sacrament, united us with Christ, and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet prepared for all peoples. Amen.

HYMN

THE BLESSING

Christ our Lord, to whom kings bowed down in worship and offered gifts, reveal to you his glory and pour upon you the riches of his grace; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Amen

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen