

Baptism of Christ Matthew 3:13-17 Sun 8th Jan 2017
Commencing & continuing NOT culmination!

Intro

Can you remember your baptism - when you were baptised? What happened? What you felt like?
I can - it was about 26, 27 years ago, in a church in Andover where I was living at the time
There were 10 of us baptised, I was the last as my surname begins with V, and we each had to share a little bit about why we were being baptised and what it meant to us.
It was a long service! But exciting. I had no idea then what my journey of faith would lead me in to!
Many of you will have been baptised as a baby.
So can you remember your confirmation? The day you affirmed for yourself the promises that were made for you as a baby by your parents and God-parents? In a confirmation service the Bishop asks those being confirmed 'Are you ready with your own mouth and from your own heart to affirm your faith in Christ?'
I wonder what memories we have of our baptism or confirmation
And I wonder what difference it has made to your life?

Let's look for a minute at **Jesus'** baptism.

The account we read in Matthews gospel is very short... just 5 verses

John had been baptising people

Jesus came to John to be baptised

John was shocked and protested vigorously - its not you but me who needs to be baptised!

Jesus said 'Let it be so now'

John reluctantly consented

Jesus was baptised in the river Jordan

And we know that he was immersed in the water, completely covered because vs 16 says 'He (Jesus) came up out of the water'

Then the heavens opened

John saw the Spirit of God descend like a dove and alight (settle) on Jesus

A voice from heaven was heard

telling Jesus that He was the son of God and how pleased God was with Him

Much to Johns shock and bewilderment, Jesus, the pure, sinless Son of God, asked to be baptised

Jesus had no need to repent - remember John had been baptising with water for repentance

But Jesus said that it was the proper thing to do.

This act of baptism identified Jesus with those sinners who were being, and would be, baptised for repentance. Those sinners for whom Jesus would ultimately die, carrying their sins, and for whom he would provide a means of ultimate forgiveness and righteousness.

Jesus entered the water with one identity - the son of Mary & Joseph.

In Matthews Gospel we move very quickly (just one chapter) from the visit of the Magi to the escape to Egypt by Mary & Joseph with their new baby, to the killing of the innocent babies by Herod, to their return from Egypt to Nazareth, to John baptising people including Jesus.

Jesus entered the water of baptism with one known identity and emerged with another - a public declaration by a voice in heaven - God - saying 'this is my Son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased' vs 17

Jesus was baptised then sent in to the desert for 40 days and then started his 3 years of intense public ministry.

His baptism was part of the preparation, a marker, for what was to follow.

I wonder what we understand as the transformation, the turning point that happens at baptism?
(PAUSE)

How do we understand baptism as preparation for our lives with and in Christ? (REPEAT)

Jesus identity as the Son of God, that has been recognised by some at His birth - the Shepherds, the angels, the Magi was confirmed as the heavens opened and the dove descended and God proclaimed him as His Son

This was not the culmination of Jesus ministry but the commencing, the start, that leads him to the cross and beyond.

And just as for Jesus, whose baptism was the start of something new, so it is for us too.

I believe that neither baptism, nor the Anglican rite of Confirmation are the culmination of faith. Nor just about profession of faith, although that is one aspect.

I believe that baptism is about the START OF NEW LIFE

Our 'drowning' in the water of baptism is where we believe we die to sin and are raised to new life, uniting us to Christ's dying on the cross and rising from the dead.

Listen to these words of introduction that can be shared at the start of a baptism service

'Baptism marks the beginning of a journey with God which continues for the rest of our lives, the first step in response to God's love. For all involved... it is a joyful moment when we rejoice in what God has done for us in Christ, making serious promises and declaring the faith.'

Jesus baptism was an event that marked the start of a new life and ministry

And so it should be for us too, whoever we are, whatever we find ourselves doing.

It is the BEGINNING of a journey, with God - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

And our life journey takes us in all sorts of directions, expected and unexpected, where God wants to encourage us and use us to work in partnership with Him, to see His Kingdom come.

Baptism marks the beginning of a journey that continues for the rest of our lives

And God wants to be with us, and share with us, and use us along the whole of that life journey.

And so, throughout this year, we are going to hear from some of you about where you are on that life journey, where you see God at work and how we can pray for you at this time

We are going to call it TTT This Time Tomorrow and Penny is going to start us off

What will you be doing (roughly) This Time Tomorrow?

Where or how have you seen God at work this last week?

How can we pray for you for this coming week?

Our identity is not static.

We have all been created in the image of God, and as Christians we belong to Him, as children of God

Our identity grows and deepens as we grow and our life experiences broaden out.

And our purpose, as children of God, baptised as the marker of the beginning of our life journey with Christ is about living out our God given identity.

Baptism is about the commencement and continuing of our life journey with Christ NOT the culmination of it

If you are like me you need encouragement on that journey and that encouragement comes on lots of different ways. But reading our Bibles and prayer are 2 important ways and so I have put on the Pew sheet 3 websites that you may find helpful. 2 help with reading our Bible on a daily basis.

One is very visual with short videos and graphics, the other has 3 passages of scripture with some short reflections on each. The good thing about this one is that it will send a daily reminder to your email address to remind you to read.

The third leads us in 10 minutes of prayer each day. It includes some music to help focus our thoughts.

Have a look at them. Hopefully they will help some of us...

And so, as we journey in to 2017 with each other and with God may we seek to grow in our understanding of Him and what He is calling us to do as children of His

And may we be expectant, looking out to see where He is at work

And be willing to serve alongside Him so that we may indeed see His Kingdom come, His will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

At your baptism you have received the light of Christ;

walk in this light all the days of your life.

Shine as a light in the world to the glory of God the Father.

Amen