

## Sunday 10 January 2021 – Bulwell United Reformed Church

The reading for the second Sunday of Epiphany is Mark 1: 4-11. This passage is the first appearance of Jesus as an adult and comes at the beginning of his ministry. His baptism is a new beginning and a transformation. John the baptizer says that he is not worthy to untie Jesus' shoes. He recognises that Jesus will be able to do much greater things by the power of the Holy Spirit. Our new beginnings come through the forgiveness God offers, which is not just the once in a lifetime event of our baptism, but all the forward-looking opportunities that God offers us each and every day. *A short service for personal communion focusing on confessing Jesus is Lord is included. Please have your bread & wine/juice ready.*

### **Call to worship**

This the day that the Lord has made.

**Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

We are the family of God.

**And are called by God's name.**

We are heirs of Christ's kingdom.

**And born of the Spirit.**

Let us, therefore, come together in thanksgiving.

**Amen.**



### **Prayer of confession**

Before they were baptised by John, the people confessed their sins.

We too come to God in confession.

Because of the pressure of our responsibilities, the business of the week and the turmoil of the week's news, we forget God.

In the rush of events, we neglect our neighbour,  
we turn in on ourselves and our own concerns  
and do not allow the love of God to direct our thinking and our actions.

***Gracious God, we come seeking the forgiveness you have promised.  
Release us from all that prevents us from being more truly Christ's disciples.  
Set us on our feet again and renew us with the companionship of your Holy Spirit.***

**Our Father who art in heaven...**

**Song            We want to see Jesus lifted high – Noel Richards**

[\(322\) We Want to See Jesus Lifted High \(worship video w/ lyrics\) - YouTube](#)

**Mark 1: 4-11**

<sup>4</sup> And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup> The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the River Jordan. <sup>6</sup> John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt round his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup> And this was his message: 'After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. <sup>8</sup> I baptise you with<sup>[a]</sup> water, but he will baptise you with<sup>[b]</sup> the Holy Spirit.'

**The baptism and testing of Jesus**

<sup>9</sup> At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup> Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. <sup>11</sup> And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'  
(NIVUK)

**The Baptism of Jesus – A Transformation**

Mark's basic account of the baptism of Jesus, recalls the prophet, John the Baptist, preaching repentance and pointing to the coming of the one expected. He will baptise with the Holy Spirit. After Jesus is baptised, he sees the Spirit descending on him 'like a dove', and hears the voice of God saying, 'You are my Son, the Beloved'.

Before Jesus arrives in Galilee, John appears in the desert, often a location of divine encounter. John points his hearers to Jesus, and his message revolves around a typical Jewish contrast: 'if you think this is important, then something much more important is just around the corner.' John offers baptism for those who repent (1.4), but one is coming who will baptise (literally 'drench' or 'immerse') in the Holy Spirit (1.8).

So when Jesus does appear, it is a surprise that rather than give the Spirit-baptism, he is baptised himself and receives the Spirit. Historically, this may be because Jesus started his career as John's disciple. John's baptism is a baptism of repentance, a ritual washing away of the old life in preparation for the new

life, which God has promised, when the Messiah comes on the 'Day of the Lord'.

In all these cases what is at issue is that there should be a change of heart, a new way of life amongst the People of God. So, when John preaches a 'baptism of repentance', it means more than saying sorry; it is about a complete change of heart and lifestyle. This is the force of these verses for us today and this 'complete change' is an ongoing process as we live out our daily walk following Jesus. Repentance is positive it means we turn away from sin and walk on the King's highway ready to be led by the Holy Spirit.

Verses 9-11 narrate Jesus' baptism. The brevity emphasises the importance of the details – note that Mark does not include John as the baptiser. Firstly, the heavens were 'torn apart', a violent phrase. The only other occasion it occurs in Mark's Gospel is when the Temple curtain is torn in two after Jesus' death (15.38). Now, in Jesus, there is a new opening between heaven and earth.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit comes on Jesus as a dove. John's promise is visibly fulfilled in Jesus who, having received the Spirit in a unique way, is able to give the Spirit to others. The Spirit who descends on Jesus is the same Spirit promised to us through Jesus (verse 8), enabling us to do what God wants us to do. As we move into 2021 we need to keep in step with the Holy Spirit and encourage each other in the Body of Christ to be creative as we respond to new circumstances.

### **Prayer of intercession**

We pray for the whole Church, which you called into being through your Son. We ask you that by your Holy Spirit your church may be renewed and empowered for the task for which you gave it life. (pause) **The Lord hears our prayers.**

God of peace and comfort as this time is uncertain and stressful, many people are anxious and fearful, give us strength and lift us up that we may find comfort in you. Give hope to us all, especially who are ill and suffering with life threatening health issues. Be with them who are alone and in self-isolation and under any treatment. (pause) **The Lord hears our prayers.**

We pray for the World Health Organisation and all key workers, who are helping others. We also pray for the scientists who are working hard for making the vaccination, guide them and give them your wisdom. We also pray for all leaders and politicians around the globe, to give them wisdom to make

good strategies and plans for the good of all. (pause) **The Lord hears our prayers.**

*In this moment of silence we bring forth all the desires of our hearts.....*

We ask all this in Jesus precious name. **Amen**

**Song From heaven you came – Graham Kendrick**

[\(322\) From Heaven You Came \(Servant King\) - Graham Kendrick \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

### **HOLY COMMUNION Prayer of Thanksgiving – The Baptism of Jesus**

Let us lift up our hearts.

***We lift them to the Lord.***

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

***It is right to give our thanks and praise.***

It is indeed right to give you our thanks and praise, O God,  
for you rule over the mighty waters  
and baptise us into your life.  
You called your people to follow your ways,  
and sent your servant, John the Baptist,  
to proclaiming a baptism of repentance  
for the forgiveness of sins.

He pointed to the one who was to come  
— your beloved child, Jesus the Christ —  
who came among us,  
strengthening us and blessing us with your peace.  
When he was baptised in the fearful waters of death,  
you raised him to life  
and tore open the heavens  
so that all might be baptised with your Holy Spirit  
and enter into your presence  
confident of being declared  
to be the children who please you.



***Therefore, with our hearts lifted high,  
we offer you thanks and praise at all times  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.***

### **The Sharing of the Bread and the Wine**

We give thanks to you, O God, that you cause the vine to yield fruit.  
We bless you for Christ, the true vine, whose blood was poured out for us.  
By your Holy Spirit sanctify us and this wine, that the cup which we bless may  
be to us the communion of the blood of Christ, and that through abiding in him  
we may bear fruit that shall last.

Eat this bread. It is the bread of life.

Drink this wine. It is the cup of blessing.

### **Prayer after communion**

Loving God, you have fed us generously at this table, as we have remembered  
Jesus and rejoiced that he is with us today. We are ready now to follow him,  
and to be your people in the world. May your Holy Spirit show us the way,  
make us holy and fill us with love.

### **A sending out prayer**

Lord, help us to be open to your prompting  
as we seek to discover what you would have us be and do.  
Remind us again and again that you have promised to be our  
guide and companion on our journey.  
Help us to look forward with renewed commitment,  
and bless our thinking and speaking and doing.  
In your name.

**Amen.**



