

# Sermon for 10 Jan 2021

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## Jesus' baptism by John

I am going to be looking at three of the four Gospels, which speak of the Baptism of Jesus, these are Matthew 3, Mark 1 our passage today and Luke 3

Before Christmas we heard in John's Gospel about John being the one who was to prepare the way for the Lord, what did that mean to you? It got me thinking about what I had been prepared for and what baptism meant to me. I know that my parents had me baptised when I was a small child, probably as was the tradition in those ancient far gone days, it was for the baby to be baptised just in case anything went wrong and the child died. I think it was a bit of a throwback to the 1800's where infant mortality was very high.

Well when I was around 43ish, I saw a young woman from our youth club being baptised at Peterborough Faith Camp, and I asked my vicar whether I could be baptised.

This was Rev Stoker Wilson which many may remember, and he asked me to pray into why I wanted to be baptised as an adult, and not just accept my child baptism from my parents. I knew that I believed, and that I was saved, "technical jargon for accepting Jesus into my whole life", I wanted to give people who had known me before I was a Christian, and had seen me in all my mistakes and disgrace, and to offer them the opportunity to make the same decision I had made.

When we look at this morning's Mark reading, it was about Jesus making a journey, this is the same in Matthew's Gospel but the wording is slightly different. In Mark's account he arrived where John was baptising but in Matthew's account he sort out John to be baptised. Not just turning up as many had, and having it done. John did not know Jesus, not as a man but he did know the entity he represented, it was his God. Jesus gives the explanation as to why he needed to be baptised, and when reading this I found myself comparing my decision to be baptised with that of Jesus, I found that I fell well short of the righteousness he was calling out for.

In the two accounts by Matthew and Mark about Jesus' baptism, as soon as he was baptised he was moved away from his comfort zone and sent into a place he did not know. In Mark the heaven was torn apart, a picture so forceful in nature, it showed how important God saw this action for Jesus to be, and the assurance that it was right by God's voice confirming him as his Son. For me after I had been baptised I started to wear a lapel pin, which depicted the Holy Spirit as a dove.

At this time, I worked for British Rail in Newcastle, and we had a big brash Scotsman who was a manager, who challenged everyone he saw. I returned to work after the camp and was walking down the passage between the offices, when John Douglas, (would you believe it another John) came to challenge me as to why I wore this lapel pin. I found myself meekly testifying to him that, 'I had made a decision for Jesus', and had been

baptised in his name. In a loud gruff voice, he said Hallelujah at least there is another Christian in the building. Not God's voice but another voice confirming my decision. He then proceeded to give me some of his story, about being a Church of Scotland Christian in a mainly Catholic area of Glasgow, and how they use to go around in his University days testifying in the squares. This was such a boost for me and as we look at the story of Jesus, he also gets a boost before going into a dry place, the heavens were opened up and he saw the Spirit of God descending and resting on him like a dove and heard his father's voice.

So many similarities came to me which I had never considered before and then I realised that Jesus had prepared a way for me all those centuries before I was born.

I wondered how many people in Jesus' day found themselves in similar circumstances after their baptism, and that of Jesus? Being questioned why they had done this. How many of us here today can relate to that, especially if you have had an adult baptism, or as it is called in Anglican terms, a rededication of your baptismal vows? It is awesome for me. Therefore, how much more would it have been for those people who were being baptised at the same time and seeing Jesus for who he was? Do you think they could believe that he would die for them so short a time afterwards?

In Luke's Gospel we see the same baptism being portrayed but in this Gospel, Luke does not identify the wilderness experience or the temptations Jesus went through, he only relates how old he was, and that this was the start of his ministry, he then launches into Jesus' genealogy, identifying how they could legally see him as a direct descendant of God.

I think Luke tries to justify his statement by relating to the way Jews recorded their history and ancestry, it was very important to them that they be seen to have been an ancestor of either Abraham or Moses. Also considering that at this particular time Pharisees and Saducees were attending the baptism, to see who turned up. However, in the Matthew and Mark's Gospels he goes straight into the wilderness and identifies the temptation of Jesus by the devil, looking at Jesus the human, as all of us are, and not as Luke did, where he points to Jesus' through his ancestry.

Matthew, who usually is identified as writing for the Jewish people, takes an actual look at Jesus the man, and what he undergoes before he starts his ministry. Considering what Luke says, he starts his Gospel with a statement about giving a factual record for Theophilus to consider, he misses this important part out altogether.

So to conclude this mornings sermon I will ask a question, this is not to be answered here today but is for us all to give consideration and prayer afterwards.

If we are believing followers of Jesus, how much are we following what he taught, what he said, and what he showed us we can do?

Are we participating in being a Christian or are we playing a part that people want to see and therefore hiding our lights under a bowl so that we remain in the background or in the shadows? If we have the Holy Spirit as Randy prayed for us to have last week then we have all we need. This may be a hard ask as I don't know people's situations, but I do

know that in these times people want to see reality not a mask, they want to know we care and will be there for them.

It is a hard ask, I know that, but no harder for us today than it was for the disciples who were with Jesus. I don't want to know your answers, but God does and he sees our hearts and hears our prayers.

Again if we have the Holy Spirit as Randy prayed for us to have last week then we have all we need. I would like to pray for us all at this time and I hope you can accept my prayer.

Lord Jesus, we know how much you have given for us. Help us to give of ourselves as much as we can. You say that you know what we will say before we say it, so there is no need for us to say anything. Yet we also know that you love to hear our voice, so Lord, hear our prayer when we say that we will follow you through all our lives, and that we will listen to what you have to say to us about what we can do for you, at this time within our lives. Send your Holy Spirit as you did in the days of the Apostles and let us see your Majesty and power in us today. May you bless us and keep us all safe. In Jesus name, Amen.