

The First Sunday after The Epiphany - The Baptism of Our Lord - January 9th, 2011

READINGS & PSALM

Isaiah 42:1-9

Psalm 29

Acts 10:34-43

Matthew 3:13-17

INTRODUCTIONS

These may be included in the Parish Magazine, in the weekly service sheet, or by the lector as an introduction to the readings.

Isaiah 42 : 1-9

This passage links with the Gospel, where we shall hear a heavenly voice declaring God's delight in his beloved Son. Isaiah had visualised that same delight in a spirit-filled nation, or a person, whose vocation would be to serve God unstintingly.

Acts 10 : 34-43

This reading is a small part of a story. Peter, and some others who share the new resurrection faith, tell a Roman centurion all the events of Jesus's life, and the meaning of it all. For the first time, the Gospel reaches beyond Judaism, and the climax is the surprising conversion of Gentiles.

Matthew 3 : 13-17

Baptism is a new beginning, and the Lord himself comes to the river Jordan to be baptised by John before he begins his public mission. God delights to declare his Son, upon whom his Spirit rests.

PRAYERS

Eternal Father, who declared Jesus our Lord to be your beloved Son at his baptism: grant that we and all who have become his members through baptism may rejoice to be your children and the servants of all men; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. BCP. 1st Sunday after Epiphany

Let us pray [that we will be faithful to our baptismal calling.]

Almighty, eternal God, when the Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism in the Jordan, you revealed him as your own beloved Son. Keep us, your children, born of water and the Spirit, faithful to our calling. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

AAPB

Eternal God, at the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan you proclaimed him your Son, and anointed him with the Holy Spirit: grant that all who are baptized into his name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess him as Lord and Saviour; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen. APBA

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

SEQUENCE 1

Thematic

God of grace and glory,

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you call us with your voice of flame
to be your people, faithful and courageous.
as your beloved Son
embraced his mission in the waters of baptism,
inspire us with the fire of your Spirit
to join in his transforming work.
we ask this in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Intercessory

Sisters and brothers,
our baptismal vows call us to compassion and mercy
on behalf of those in need.
we offer our prayers for the church and the world.

Prayers of the People, concluding with:

Lord God,
you revealed your Son in the waters of the Jordan
and anointed him with the power of the Holy Spirit
to proclaim good news to all people.
sanctify us by the same Spirit,
that we may proclaim the healing power of the gospel
by acts of love in your name. Amen.

Scripture

Creator God, our soul's delight,
your voice thunders over the waters,
liberating the future from the past.
in the Spirit's power and the waters of rebirth,
Jesus was declared your blessed and beloved Son;
may we recall our baptism,
and be disciples of the Anointed One. Amen.

SEQUENCE 2

Presider or deacon

As we celebrate the baptism of Christ, let us offer prayers to God who gives light to the nations and freedom to prisoners.

Deacon or other leader

By the baptism of the Son of God in the river Jordan.

Lord, have mercy.

For N our bishop and the presbyters, for the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

Lord, have mercy.

For N,N,... our catechumen(s) and for their families and sponsors.

Lord, have mercy.

For all who seek Christ, and for the conversion of the whole human race.

Lord, have mercy.

For mercy, peace, and justice throughout the world

Lord, have mercy.

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For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering, the hungry and the oppressed, and those in prison.

Lord, have mercy.

For the dying.

Lord, have mercy.

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.

Lord, have mercy.

Let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

Lord of the living and the dead, accept the prayers we offer on this joyful feast and allow us to eat and drink at the table of your Son; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SEQUENCE 3

For all bishops, deaconesses and pastors, that as a community of disciples, they might bring light to the nations. Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer

For the world, that the light of Christ might dispel slander and wickedness, bringing new life to broken relationships. Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer

For the baptized everywhere, that through word and action we might proclaim the one who welcomes the rejected and despised. Good and faithful God,

Hear our prayer

For politicians, doctors, pastors, lawyers and all who have been entrusted with society's respect, that they might walk humbly before their creator. Good and faithful God,

Hear our prayer

For all in need of forgiveness, that reconciliation might be granted to them. Good and faithful God,

Hear our prayer

For all who have gathered here, that we might together discover the risen Christ, serving each other with joyous hearts. Good and faithful God,

Hear our prayer

For all who today receive God's grace in baptism, especially _____, that the oil of anointing might remind them to offer their bodies continually as living sacrifices. Good and faithful God,

Hear our prayer

For ourselves, that we might discern the Holy Spirit in those who are newly baptized and welcome the renewal they offer, so that the church might be torn down where it is in error, and built up where it proclaims good news. Good and faithful God,

Hear our prayer

God of New Life, in baptism you have claimed us as your own. Fill us now with your Holy Spirit that we might proclaim your steadfast love to the world. **Amen.**

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Benedictions

Go in peace, love and care for one another in the name of Jesus,
and as this new year commences and continues

- may the light of God surround you,
- the love of Jesus draw you closer to Himself,
- and the power of the Spirit strengthen you and grant you joy,
both now and for evermore. Amen.

Go in peace

- and may the word of our God be made flesh in you
- may the light of God surround you,
- and the love of God fill you
both now and for evermore. Amen.

REFLECTIONS

Isaiah 42: 1-9

This is one of four poetic passages in the Book of Isaiah referred to as "The Servant Songs." They describe Israel's mission as God's servant people chosen to bring "light to the nations." They represent some of the most advanced theology of the Old Testament. Though composed by an unknown prophet during Israel's exile in Babylon (586-539 BC), the early Christian church regarded these poems as prophecies about Jesus, the Messiah/Christ. Some biblical scholars have suggested that Jesus himself adopted these Servant Songs as the pattern for his ministry which began with his baptism by John.

We often read backward into this lesson words about Jesus. Certainly, the words were written about someone who would save God's people, who would live the righteous life, who would establish justice. We understand that person to be Jesus. Even if the writer of Second Isaiah did not know that it would be Jesus who would fulfill these qualifications, clearly the one who was to come would embody what he understood to be quintessential qualities of God. We believe Jesus to be the one who has made all things new, who breathes life into the people again. We believe he has given new meaning to all life. We believe that he has "reinvented" the world and the way it is to interrelate.

Is it any wonder that we see Jesus calling us to carry out justice to all of creation? If God's justice is complete and transformative, is it not transformative for all of the creation? Does not God call us to examine how we are consuming resources, the extent to which we create greenhouse gasses, the reasons we allow entire ecosystems to be destroyed? God's light shines out in the darkness and puts a spotlight on how we live. Are we truly agents of transformation and justice? What in this new year can we do better?

Psalm 29

In descriptive metaphors the psalmist 'sees' and 'hears' God during a fierce thunderstorm while worshipping in the temple. This causes the worshippers to praise the glory of God, envisioned as a monarch on a throne giving peace to his subjects.

Acts 10:34-43

The previous chapter had described the conversion of Saul, a Jewish rabbi. This chapter tells of Peter's conversion to the wider interpretation of the new faith. The gospel is for all people, not just those of the Jewish tradition. As a result of this experience, Peter preaches to a mixed congregation of Jews and Gentiles in the home of a Roman military

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officer. His new understanding of the faith is blessed by the Holy Spirit coming upon the assembly while Peter was still speaking.

Matthew 3:13-17

This simple story of Jesus' baptism by John contrasts the humility of the two. Jesus fully accepted John's ministry and insisted on being baptized by him. In Matthew's version of this incident only Jesus saw the Spirit descend as a dove and heard God's voice. It may be interpreted best as Jesus' ordination for his ministry.

SERMON STARTER

Jesus came from Galilee to John

Jesus had been living quietly in Nazareth & now came to a significant moment in his life - *at the Jordan....*

1. The Baptist 13-14: John had been preaching and baptising – *preparing the way for the Lord...* Now the Lord was here *to be baptized by him* – much to John's dismay! *14 John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?'* He felt so unworthy – but note the humility and sense of propriety of Jesus:- *15 But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.'* Then he consented....

2. The Baptism -15-16: in the river Jordan – *just as he came up from the water* - something wonderful happened *16 when Jesus had been baptized...*

a) visibly *suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.*

b) vocally – *17 a voice from heaven – God the Father...*

3. The Beloved 17: as the Father declares: *'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'* – thus verifying Jesus'

a) Messiahship – Psalm 2.7 *This is my son...*

b) Mission – Isaiah 42.1 *In whom I am well pleased...* The account of Jesus' baptism reminds us of the significance of our Baptism... May we ever be faithful to the vows and promises made & live daily for Jesus... By Norman Porteus

WEB BASED SERMON SOURCES FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

Westminster Abbey - by the Dean, Very Rev John Hall

"All kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall do him service." [Psalm 72: 11]

<http://www.westminster-abbey.org/worship/sermons/2010/january/sermon-given-at-the-epiphany-sung-eucharist-wednesday-6-january-2010>

Homilies by Mail.com

One of the authors Bass Mitchell is a Lutheran who links Epiphany with parish Bible study in the first sermon at:

<http://www.homiliesbyemail.com/Special/Epiphany/sermon1.html>

From Bideford

A blog spot by a Methodist local preacher. Quotes from various writers - this preacher has done his homework!

<http://sermonsyc.blogspot.com/2006/12/best-and-worst-sermon-for-epiphany.html>

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The Bishop of Beverley

A good example of a short sermon.

<http://www.bishopofbeverley.co.uk/Sermon2.htm>

St. John's, Edinburgh

If you want to lead with Dr No and Harry Potter here you have it. An excellent example of a telling short sermon dealing with the account in Matthew's gospel.

<http://www.stjohns-edinburgh.org.uk/sermons/johnarmes020106.shtml>

St Mark's Church wherever

Brings together Matthew's account with insights from Isaiah.

<http://www.stmarkschurch.me.uk/resources/sermons/files/20080106.pdf>

St Michael with incense wafting

And if you want one which will have incense wafting around you as you read it... look no farther!

<http://www.st-michaels.org.uk/sermons%202004/Epiphany%201.pdf>

However, if

You prefer lots of Biblical passages in a sermon, this one on Isaiah and the theme "Your light has come", may fit your criteria.

<http://chuckwarnockblog.wordpress.com/2009/01/03/sermon-your-light-has-come/>

Fancy a Mancunian accent?

http://www.mccmanchester.co.uk/sermons/sermon_04jan09.htm

Rockies Net - The Wisdom of the Magi

<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/a-epipse.php>

Rockies Net - The Rest of the Story

Good insights into Herod, Jesus as a refugee, and the slaughter of The Holy Innocents.

<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/a-epipsu.php>

Traditional homily style

<http://www.homily-service.net/ye2005/aepilord.htm>

One with a Swansea accent

<http://www.saintbarnabaschurch.org.uk/sermon060108.htm>

For children

http://www.christiancrafters.com/lesson_Epiphany.html

Matthew 3:13-17

Exegesis

Verses 13-15: to fulfil all righteousness

<http://www.lectionary.org/EXEG-Concise/NT/ConNT01-Matt/Matt%2003.13-17.htm>

Sermon

Lectionary org on Downward Mobility

<http://www.lectionary.org/Sermons/Hoff/Matt/Matt%2003.13-17,%20Mobility.htm>