

ST. MARGARET OF SCOTLAND ANGLICAN CHURCH

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Baptism of the Lord

January 9, 2022

BAPTISM OF THE LORD

January 9, 2022

10:00 a.m.

THE GATHERING OF THE COMMUNITY

THE GREETING:

Celebrant: Lord, open our lips,

People: And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Celebrant: O God, make speed to save us.

People: O Lord, make haste to help us. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Celebrant: A voice came from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased."
Matthew 3.17

PSALM: 29

Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name; worship the LORD in holy splendor.

The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over mighty waters.

The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.

The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.

The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of the LORD causes the oaks to whirl and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, "Glory!"

The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.

May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace!

People: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now and will be for ever. Amen.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

First Reading: Isaiah 43:1-7

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.
For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.

Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life.

Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you;

I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth--everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God

Second Reading: Acts 8:14-17

A READING FROM BOOK OF ACTS

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them.

The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God

The Holy Gospel: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

THE HOLY GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO LUKE

People: Glory to You Lord Jesus Christ

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah,

John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

The Gospel of Christ.

People: Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ

SERMON: The Rev. Canon Simon Bell

Baptism - The sign of renewal

Ritualized cleansing with water and forms of baptism pre-date Christianity. There were a range of forms of cleansing with water practiced in the Temple worship of early Judaism. For example, during the Feast of Atonement, when the High Priest pleaded to God for forgiveness for the wrong doing of the people, the High Priest would wash himself before he entered into the Holy of Holies as a way of ridding himself from all of the contamination or sin of the outside world. Likewise, the Hebrew Law stipulated the use of cleansing by water as a means of religious cleansing as a repeated ritual of washing that was performed as circumstances warranted it.

Within the prophetic tradition was the anticipation that when the Messiah came that washing would not simply be an outward sign of cleansing, but that he would bring about the fullness of renewal that would be of the whole person and community. Zechariah (13:1) prophesies that the fountain of God would cleanse the house of David from all their sin and uncleanness, and Ezekiel (36:25) prophesies that the well of God would sprinkle God's people with clean water and God would put in them a new heart and spirit.

The radical Jewish communities at Qumran and the Essenes prior to the time of Christ practiced ritual washing as a central element of their faith. Evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls and Qumran community's "Manual of Discipline" indicate that their desire was to re-establish the strict practice of the Law, but with the recognition that it had limits in that its outward practice was insufficient for inward renewal. They made a connection between the outward practice of ritual washing/baptism and the need for a true repentance or change of the heart found in the repeated activity of ritual cleansing. In addition, baptism was practiced within the Jewish community as a ritual of induction for Gentiles who had converted to Judaism. And, in contrast to ritual washing, this baptism was a once-of event that indicated the beginning of a new life of faith.

The Gospel of Mark tells us that John's baptism was "of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." It connected to the ritual washing practiced by the Essenes and the Qumran communities associated with the need to deal with human guilt and the desire for a transformed life. And, like their ritual washing, faced the frustration of being "incomplete" and the anticipated sign of something better.

John's baptism was not a sign of conversion to Judaism or an alternative faith. Rather, Luke's Gospel indicates to us that those who were part of the Jewish community of the time, those from the Judean countryside and Jerusalem, were flocking to John in their droves to be baptized as a form of an extension of their existing faith commitment. In essence John had popularized the connection between ritual washing and the need for inner-repentance that the Essenes and Qumran communities had made as a way of demonstrating a connection to the anticipated Messiah – the one who would bring about the full renewal of the whole person. As John indicates in Luke's Gospel, "I have baptized you with water; ... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." That, rather than an external cleansing to indicate a desire for that inner change, the one who is anticipated will baptize with the power of the Holy Spirit. That this same breath of God that hovered over the earth and was instrumental in our very creation would bring about the fullness of our restoration to what God had intended and the re-establishment of the fullness of our connectivity to God!

That anticipation finds its completion in the baptism of Christ. In that image of the communion between Jesus as the Son, the Holy Spirit as the descending dove and the Father as the affirming voice we see the culmination of all that had been anticipated in the Old Testament Law, the prophets and the practice of Essenes and Qumran communities – that the one who was to baptize us in the Holy Spirit to the fullness of what God had created us for had come. This was the anticipated Messiah who would go beyond the external ritual cleansing to the transformed heart.

That idea is most profoundly reinforced by John’s disciples. There are numerous accounts in the Gospels of the disciples of John coming to Jesus to qualify whether Jesus was actually the one they were anticipating. In fact, some become disciples of Jesus, while others – who were part of the Jewish Diaspora in the Roman Empire – were none the wiser that anything had changed after Pentecost. We come across little groups of them in Acts 8 in Samaria and Acts 19 in Ephesus. Because they had only received the baptism of John, the apostles lay hands on them that they too might receive the Holy Spirit.

While we might ask God to use this basic element of nature as a sign of grace, there is nothing “magical” about the act, elements or means of baptism. It is in this sense that Christian baptism is a sacrament, the outward sign of an inward grace. When we are presented in faith or come to faith in Christ we receive that inward grace of a transformed life and our baptism is simply a public sign or statement of what God has done within us and will continue to do through us as that grace is worked out in us in all of life.

As such there is something profound in the idea that we are not repeatedly baptized. In Ephesians (4:5) Paul reminds us that there is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” to reinforce the clear understanding that in Christ and our identification with him in our baptism we are made complete. In suggesting otherwise is to deny the very power of the Gospel story – as if what God has done was ineffective or inadequate in some way and therefore, we need to keep repeating it. This is not like the ongoing ritual washing practices in the Law that constantly needs to be repeated in-order to be effective. No. For the Christian this is the fullness of what was promised!

The practice of Christian baptism reminds us of the fullness of what Christ has done in our life when we are presented in faith or come to faith. This is not like the ritual washing of the Essenes and Qumran communities or the baptism of John that anticipated the coming of the Messiah. Christian baptism is an outward sign of the fullness of what God has achieved in us through the Holy Spirit, namely the renewal of our inner self and the establishment of a new heart within us. And, as such, it is there to remind us that we are participants in the fuller restoration of all of creation in Christ. This is the very thing that all of those earlier expressions of faith point to. They are the precursors of what culminates the journey, namely the full restoration of our humanity in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

(Time allowed for Silent Reflection.)

THE APOSTLE’S CREED

Celebrant: Let us confess the faith of our baptism, as we say,

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He 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 and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again 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.

INTERCESSIONS AND THANKSGIVINGS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE #13

(In joy and humility let us pray to the creator of the universe, saying, "Lord, grant us peace.")

By the good news of our salvation brought to Mary by the angel, hear us, O Lord.

Lord, grant us peace.

By the mystery of the Word made flesh, hear us, O Lord.

Lord, grant us peace.

By the birth in time of the timeless son of God, hear us, O Lord.

Lord, grant us peace.

By the manifestation of the King of glory to the shepherds and magi, hear us, O Lord.

Lord, grant us peace.

By the submission of the maker of the world to Mary and Joseph of Nazareth, hear us, O Lord.

Lord, grant us peace.

By the baptism of the Son of God in the river Jordan, hear us, O Lord.

Lord, grant us peace.

Grant that the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, hear us, O Lord.

Lord, grant us peace.

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY (Prayer of the Day)

All: Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit, keep your children, born of water and the Spirit, faithful to their calling; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Celebrant: And now, as our Saviour has taught us, we are bold to say,

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on 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 DISMISSAL:

Celebrant: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Notices

Blessing

The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make his face shine on us and be gracious to us. The Lord look upon us with favour and grant us peace. **Amen.**

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Today's Online Service Recorded by:

Celebrant The Rev. Canon Simon Bell
Audio/Visual David Paradis

This morning in our worship we remember in our prayers those of our family and friends who have immediate needs and concerns:

Cecil Nelson's Family; Braedy; Gabrielle & Dom & family; Brandon & Rineke Semsch; Samantha Wright; Karyn; Shane & Shelly Finnigan & Families; Donna & Ray Wilson; Bill & Cathy Gray; Rev. Janet Mitchell; Rose McIntyre; Dave & Winnie Fulcher; Laura Johnston; Phil & Kathy C.; Cecil Nelson's Family; Cole; Stephen Bertelsen; Martin Bertelsen; Lorraine W.; Sharron Snider; Peter Hubbard; Mark Ralston; Kim Middaugh; Jackson; Sally Smith; Marilyn Lloyd; Theresa & Pete; Valerie; Darlene Jessem; Doreen; Brenda Jessem; Brenda & Brian; Derek; Jaxon Croft; Sean.

The names below are people in need of ongoing prayers for various reasons so we ask you to please continue to pray for them and their continuing need of God's healing touch and grace:

Adesh; Lisa Marie; Sophia L.; Joyce Antony; Pam Rees; Alvin Maynard; Dave Lawrence; Livia & Neil Purcell; Jim Tomkins; Sheila Green; Carrie Snow; Sheri Scott; Carl; Mark & Erin; Wally Raymond; Christine; Audrey Moody; Lynda Raye; Garn Mennell; Lee & Jeannie Martin; Michelle Sinclair and mom; Jane & Ron Lewis; Cecilia Mowat; Marilyn Foley; Bill Snow; Deborah Hall; Owen; Jen Galicinski; Arlene; Joan Gough; Lorraine W; Fr. Murray; Margie Mills; Eunice Merrett; Jean Wallace; Nancy Dodds; Wendy Goodyer; Gordon Kennedy; Do Saunders; Jefferson Jr.; June Osolin; Tanya Wade-Vargas.

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer we pray for:

Iglesia Anglicana de Chile.

In the Toronto Diocesan Cycle of Prayer we pray for:

The Honorary Canons of St. James Cathedral