

The Baptism of Our Lord

10-01-2021

St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Genesis 1: 1-5 God Said – Let there be Light

Psalms 29 In "The voice of the Lord" there is Power

Acts 19: 1-7 Baptism in the Name of Jesus

Mark 1: 4-11 The Baptism of Jesus

Introduction

Today, the First Sunday after Epiphany is set down as the day we recall and celebrate the Baptism of Jesus.

Today I would like to focus on the words heard by those present at Jesus Baptism :-

'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

The Power of Words

Let us begin by looking at the power of words.

Words are how we as human beings communicate. Yes, they are also backed up by actions, and actions can often speak louder than words, but words in and of themselves can have significant consequences.

I would like to share with you two person stories where I have been impacted by the words of others.

Firstly, when I was a child of about 8 or 9 years old we were at the house of family friends and were playing a game of darts. I don't recall playing before, and whilst I was hitting the board, I was struggling to go around the numbers. In a light hearted throw away line, I said to the Grandfather of the boy I was playing with, "I'm not really good at this". I wasn't expecting or anticipating a reply, but he came back quite swiftly with words something like, "Well you're actually terrible." As a small kid, I recall feeling quite hurt by his words.

Secondly, after my ordination to the Priesthood, I was speaking with a lady I had known for quite a while. She is a committed and involved member of the church, and has been for a long time. Her profession is a social worker and she took the marriage preparation classes that Leeza and I attended many years before. I can't recall the exact words of the conversation, but it was along the lines that she didn't always feel this way at ordinations, but at mine she had an overwhelming sense that this was good and right, and she felt that it had come about in God's good time.

These two stories are of course opposites. One showed the power of words to bring down, and the other the power of words to build up.

It is amazing the difference that words can make, and we should be mindful of how the words we speak may impact the lives of others.

As followers of Jesus, we need to find ways to use the words that we speak, to build others up, rather than bring them down.

The Word of God

Our words to others are important, but more important for us, are God's words to us. In the Bible readings today, we hear a lot about the "Voice of God".

In Genesis we hear how God said, "Let there be light", and it came to be. In Psalm 29 we hear how the voice of God has great power over nature. In the Reading from Acts 19 we hear how the disciples are baptized into the name of Jesus. In our Gospel reading from Mark, we hear God's words as Jesus was baptized:-

'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

The Words spoken by God at Jesus' baptism hold so much Love. Firstly that Jesus is loved and secondly that God is pleased with Him.

And we can also know this Love, if we accept what Jesus has done for us. It's all about God's Grace. There is nothing we can do to earn God's love. It's only by accepting what Jesus, the Word of God, has done for us, that we too can be assured that we are forgiven, and are also God's beloved Children. The Sacrament we use to affirm this in our lives is Baptism.

The Baptism of Jesus

So if John's baptism was for repentance from sin, and Jesus is God, the second Person of the Trinity, why did He need to be baptized. The simple answer is that he didn't, but theologians have come up with some reasons why Jesus chose to be baptized as a part of his earthly life:-

- It initiated his mission to bring salvation for all people.
- It showed Jesus' support for John's ministry.
- Jesus was identifying with our own humanness and sin.
- And it gave us an example to follow.

In fact, in the reading from the Acts of the Apostles today we hear that Christian Baptism is different to the Baptism of Repentance that John initiated to announce the coming of Jesus. Whilst Christian baptism involves repentance, it also includes the assurance of forgiveness that we have in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. In our current Anglican Prayer Book the first question we ask is, "Do you turn to Christ?"

So, our baptism is different to Jesus' baptism, but it is the Sacrament we use to acknowledge we accept what Jesus has done for us.

The symbolism of going under the water and coming back out is Drowning and coming back to life. In baptism we are made one with Christ, in His death and resurrection.

And if we are made one with Jesus, we are to live our lives with Jesus. Baptism is about membership in the Church of God. But it is very different to say joining a Netball Club, or a Rotary Club. Baptism calls us into the life of God, not only in all this world has to offer, but for all eternity.

Conclusion

So, as we remember Jesus' Baptism today, may we recall God's words to Jesus, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

May we also be reminded of our own Baptism, the symbolism behind it, and what it calls us into. A life assuring us that we are loved by God, and a life in which we are called to share that Love with those around us. In all that we do and in all that we say. Amen.