

The Baptism of Our Lord
08-01-2023
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Isaiah 42:1-9 The Lord's Servant will come to bring a Light to the Nations

Psalms 29 The voice of the Lord is all powerful

Acts 10:34-43 The 'Good News' of Jesus is for "All" people

Matthew 3:13-17 The Baptism of Jesus by John

Introduction

Last week we celebrated "The Naming and Circumcision of Jesus". We explored the importance of our own names, and the power names have, especially the Name of Jesus.

Today we have quickly moved on about 30 years in the life of Jesus, and in the readings we remember, "The Baptism of Our Lord", and we hear the words which came from Heaven for Jesus:-

'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'

Today I would like us to reflect on God's words for Jesus, how they are also important for us, and the significance of our own baptism's.

The Baptism of Jesus

Let us begin by looking at the Baptism of Jesus.

When we think about Jesus' baptism, it seems like an odd thing to celebrate. When we are baptized we say :-

"Baptism with water signifies the cleansing from sin that Jesus' death makes possible, and the new life that God gives us through the Holy Spirit."

Poor John the Baptist must have been beside himself. He knew who Jesus was, he knew Jesus didn't need to be baptised. In fact, he wanted it to be the other way around, he wanted Jesus to baptize him. But Jesus insisted, and John baptised Jesus. Clearly, Jesus didn't need to be baptised as we do, as baptism is a sign of repentance and acceptance of our need for God in our lives. Theologians talk much about why Jesus chose to do this, but I think the importance of Jesus' baptism for us, is mainly around Jesus' willingness to identify his Humanity with us, and the acknowledgement of his Divinity at the start of his public ministry.

God's Power and Love

So, what does the Baptism of Jesus tell us about God. Firstly, I believe the Baptism of Jesus speaks to us of the power of God, and the Love of God for us.

Jesus didn't need to be baptised. In his divinity, Jesus was God and therefore had no need to seek forgiveness. The fact that Jesus chose baptism, speaks of God being powerful enough to do as God chooses.

The supernatural sign of the dove, and the words from heaven also give us a glimpse of the power God has over this world.

And the fact that Jesus chose to identify with our humanity, shows how much God loves us. We talked about this when we explored the incarnation at Christmas time. God loves us so much that he chose to become a human being with us, and for us, so that we can know the way to God.

God's love for us knows no bounds.

If we know and seek to follow Jesus in our lives, we can be assured of God's love for us.

Our Own Baptism

Just as Jesus was baptised at the beginning of his public ministry, baptism for us is just the beginning of our lives following Jesus. Baptism is not an event to be done and ticked off the list, but rather baptism is the start of a life long quest to live as followers of Jesus.

God wants us to thrive and to flourish. In John 10:10 when Jesus describes himself as the good shepherd, he says these words:-

'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.'

Does anyone remember their baptism?

I actually remember my baptism. I was an 11 year old.

Whilst Baptism is extremely important to each individual, it is not a private thing. Baptism occurs in the midst of a faith community. We cannot thrive as Christians unless we are connected to one another. In our individualistic society we often tend to compartmentalize faith as a very individualistic choice. Whilst we must all make the decision to accept and follow Jesus, we can only live into this, as part of the community of faith.

Whilst God will prevail and God's Kingdom will eventually be fully realized, when Jesus returns, the Church only exists in this current age in the lives of the followers of Jesus. The baptised are the eyes and the ears, the hands and the feet, and the mouth of Jesus. When the baptised gather to worship and praise God, the presence of God can be seen in the world.

As the baptised, each and everyone of us, has a job to do, and a roll to play.

The Words at Jesus' Baptism

Finally, what might we glean from the words from Heaven, in today's gospel?

'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'

Words are powerful. Words can bless, and words can curse. English playwright Edward Buler-Lytton famously wrote the line, in one of his plays:-

"The pen is mightier than the sword"

How we use words in our lives is important. Are we building others up, or are we tearing them down? As the baptised we are called to build up the Body of Christ.

Sometimes we may not realize the power of our words when we speak with others. The society around us conditions us to think individualistically. We hear in advertisements phrases like:-

"Your deserve it" or "You have to look after yourself"

These phrases may have an element of truth to them, but when taken in isolation they can be very detrimental to us in our relationships with others.

Conversely, we hear the great commands of Jesus:-

'Love God, Love your neighbour as yourself'

And we stand up every week and say:-

'We are the Body of Christ. His Spirit is with us.
The peace of the Lord be always with you. And also with you.'

As Christians we are called to be very careful how we use our words. How we speak with others is very important. In the words from heaven today we hear how Jesus is loved, and how God is pleased with Jesus.

Conclusion

So, what do we take away today as we hear again the story of the baptism of Jesus.

Hopefully we will be reminded of how powerful God really is, but also know how much God loves us.

That our own Baptism is something to be lived into, not as a chore, but so that we might flourish.

And that we should be mindful of how we speak to those around us. So that we are building them up, and not tearing them down.

And that we might endeavour to live our lives, so that we too, like Jesus, might hear these words from God:-

“You are my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

Amen.