

Welcome

Hymn - TIS 454 Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness

Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
gold of obedience and incense of lowliness
bring, and adore him: the Lord is his name.

Low at his feet lay your burden of carefulness,
high on his heart he will bear it for you,
comfort your sorrows, and answer your prayerfulness,
guiding your steps in the way best for you.

Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness
of the poor wealth you would reckon to own:
truth in its beauty and love in its tenderness,
these are the offerings to bring to his throne.

These, though we bring them in trembling and fearfulness,
he will accept for the name that is dear,
mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,
trust for our trembling, and hope for our fear.

Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
gold of obedience and incense of lowliness
bring, and adore him: the Lord is his name.

Greeting

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you. **And also with you**

Sentence of the Day

But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Matthew 3:14-15

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

'This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it:
You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Lord, have mercy on us, and write your law in our hearts by your Holy Spirit

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hidden: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name

through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of the Day

Eternal God, at the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan, you proclaimed him your beloved Son, and anointed him with the Holy Spirit; grant that all who are baptised in 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, now and forever.

Amen

The Ministry of the Word

Genesis 22:1-8

¹ Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

² Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”

³ Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”

⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷ Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?”

“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

“The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

⁸ Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Psalm: Isaiah 42:1-9

¹ “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations.

² He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets.

³ A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;

⁴ he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope.”

⁵ This is what God the LORD says—the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it:

⁶ “I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles,

⁷ to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

⁸ “I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols.

⁹ See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.”

Romans 6:1-7

¹ What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin — ⁷ because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Matthew 3:13-17

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

¹⁵ Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.

¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” This is the gospel of the Lord: **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

Sermon - Jesus's Baptism and Ours

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers

Let us pray for the world and the church.

Response: Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

The Lord's Prayer

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive
those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the
kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

We are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. 1 John 3:2-3

Prayer of Approach

We do not presume to come to your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

The Confession

Knowing the goodness of God and our failure to respond with love and obedience, let us confess our sins, saying together

Merciful God, our maker and our judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do: we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves; we repent, and are sorry for all our sins. Father, forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith: pardon you and set you free from all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Greeting of Peace

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn TIS 194 - O love how deep, how broad, how high!

O love how deep, how broad, how high!

it fills the heart with ecstasy

that God, the Son of God, should take

our mortal form for mortals' sake.

He sent no angel to our race

of higher or of lower place

but wore the robe of human frame

himself, and to this lost world came.

**For us he was baptized, and bore
his holy fast, and hungered sore;
for us temptations sharp he knew;
for us the tempter overthrew.**

**For us he prayed, for us he taught,
for us his daily works he wrought,
by words and signs and actions, thus
still seeking not himself but us.**

**For us to wicked hands betrayed,
scourged, mocked, in purple robe arrayed,
he bore the shameful cross and death;
for us at length gave up his breath.**

**For us he rose from death again,
for us he went on high to reign,
for us he sent his Spirit here
to guide, to strengthen and to cheer.**

**To him whose boundless love has won
salvation for us through his Son,
to God the Father, glory be
both now and through eternity.**

Prayer for the Offering

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have gifts to share.
Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom.

Blessed be God for ever.

The Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. And also with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give our thanks and praise.

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere, mighty Creator, everliving God.
We give you thanks and praise for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who by the power
of your Spirit was born of Mary and lived as one of us.

By his death on the cross, he offered the one true sacrifice for sin, and obtained an
eternal deliverance for his people.

Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim
your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Merciful God, we thank you for these gifts of your creation, this bread and wine,

and we pray that by your Word and Holy Spirit, we who eat and drink them may be partakers of Christ's body and blood.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread; and when he had given you thanks he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' After supper, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks he gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Therefore we do as our Saviour has commanded: proclaiming his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, and looking for his coming again, we celebrate, with this bread and this cup, his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

Renew us by your Holy Spirit, unite us in the body of your Son and bring us with all your people into the joy of your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom, and in whom, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we worship you, Father, in songs of never-ending praise:

Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen.

As this broken bread was once many grains, which have been gathered together and made one bread: so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

The gifts of God for the people of God

The Communion

After Communion

Gracious God, thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Thank you for assuring us of your goodness and love, and that we are living members of Christ's body.

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.

Notices

Hymn TIS 281 When God Almighty came to be one of us

When God Almighty came to be one of us

Masking the glory of his golden train

Dozens of plain things kindles by accident

And they will never be the same again

Sing all you midwives dance all the carpenters

Sing all the publicans and shepherds too

God in his mercy uses the commonplace

God on his birthday had a need of you

Splendour of Rome and Local Authority
Working on policy with furrowed head
Joined to locate Messiah's nativity
Just where the prophets had already said
Sing all you tax-men dance the Commissioners
Sing civil servants and policemen too
God is his purpose uses the governments
God on his birthday had a need of you

Wise men they called them earnest astrologers
Watching for meaning in the moving stars
Science or fancy learned or laughable
Theirs was a vision that was brought to pass
Sing all you wise men dance all the scientists
Whether your theories are false or true
God uses knowledge God uses ignorance
God on his birthday had a need of you

Sing all creation made for his purposes
Called by his providence to live and move
None is unwanted none insignificant
Love needs a universe of folk to love
Old men and maidens young men and children
Black ones and coloured ones and white ones too
God on his birthday and to eternity
God took upon himself the need of you

Notices

Dismissal

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

Sermon - Jesus's baptism and ours

Matthew 3:13-17, Genesis 22:1-8, Isaiah 42:1-9, Romans 6:1-7

Who here has been baptised? Were you baptised as an adult? As an infant? Both? If you haven't been baptised, can I encourage you to talk to me about it, since Jesus commands Christians to be baptised.

Today in the church calendar we are commemorating Jesus' baptism by John in the river Jordan. Just as he was baptised, so he also commanded Christians to be baptized, and today I want to talk about both these sorts of baptism, John's baptism of Jesus and the baptism Christians are called to.

Matthew 3:11 says John the Baptist came to "baptize with water for repentance." John's baptism signified repentance - turning away from sin, as did baptism in the Jesus's ministry. John 4 says, "the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John – ² although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples". The church took up baptism because of Jesus's command at the end of his earthly ministry when he said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," Matthew 28:19.

When Jesus met John at the Jordan, Matthew tells us John was reluctant to baptise Jesus. John said 'It is I who need your baptism, baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire, rather than you who need my baptism in mere water!' This idea, that Jesus, the 'one who knew no sin' (2 Cor 5.21) needs a 'baptism of repentance of sin' is certainly strange, but Jesus responds that 'it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.' This explanation needs some teasing out.

Firstly, unlike elsewhere in the New Testament where righteousness is more about our status before God, being holy and righteous, Matthew uses the word 'righteousness' to indicate our good responses to the demands of God or doing the actions God requires of us. 'Fulfilment' in the New Testament usually has the idea of completion or perfection, and when Jesus talks about 'fulfilling' he usually refers

to completing, or perfecting what started in the Old Testament. In other words, it was necessary for Jesus to be baptised to complete or perfect what started in Israel's history. To understand this we need to read this narrative with our Old Testaments open, looking for how Jesus completes or perfects what started there.

After Jesus comes up from the water there is the sudden opening of the heavens, and God's voice affirms Jesus to the crowd. The words 'my son, my beloved, in whom I delight' takes us back to at least two significant Old Testament passages. The first is Gen 22.2, where God calls Abraham to offer Isaac, your 'son, whom you love' as a sacrifice. That narrative ends with God providing the sacrifice, which he does by providing a ram, but ultimately in God providing his son in Jesus's crucifixion. Another allusion is to the Servant Song in Isa 42.1, where God's servant 'in whom I delight' will be anointed with God's Spirit, will bring justice to the nations, and has been called 'in righteousness' (Is 42.6, which we read as our psalm). Again, Jesus is the perfection of this prophecy.

Can you see other Old Testament allusions in our Matthew passage?

- The combination of a dove and the Spirit over the water reminds us of the beginning of creation, when the Spirit of God broods over the chaotic deep. This suggests that Jesus is the one who brings the new creation (2 Cor 5.17?)
- A dove also comes across the water in the account of Noah and the flood in Genesis 6-9. Noah's father said Noah would bring the people comfort (or rest) in the labor and painful toil of their hands caused by the ground the LORD has cursed. Genesis 5:29 (Gen 5.29). Noah led a faithful remnant, rescuing them from the judgement of God on the sin of the world after the 'heavens were opened' (Gen 7.11). This suggests Jesus is the one to rescue us from judgement, and give us true rest (Heb 4.1-11)?
- Passing through the waters of the Jordan was a key moment in the saga of God's deliverance from slavery in Egypt, when they finally completed their journey and entered the promised land

(Joshua 3-4). This suggests Jesus (his name being the Greek version of Joshua) is the one who will finally deliver God's people from all their slavery to sin, and complete the promise of God's deliverance?

These allusions remind us of these other episodes in the life of God's people, we can see how they are brought to completion, to perfection, in the ministry of Jesus—then and now. Jesus had to be baptised to bring to perfection the work God started in the Old Testament.

However, we still need to ask what it says about baptism. I said that baptism was an important part of Jesus ministry and of the church's, but what is its significance?

Baptism demonstrated that salvation is not through your bloodline. The Jews thought they were saved by being ethnically Jewish - born into Jewish families. Yet John calls Jews to repentance and baptism, which previously had only been required of gentile proselytes. John said to Jews, in effect, "Confess your sins, repent, and signal this with baptism, because God's wrath is hanging over you like an axe over the root of a tree." The Jews needed to admit that they were sinners and still needed to get right with God.

In Matthew, the Pharisees and Sadducees had thought they were safe since God had made a promise that the children of Abraham would be blessed. They thought God couldn't destroy them because then there would be no one left for God to fulfill the promises to, and God doesn't lie. But God will be faithful to fulfill his promises. If all of the children of Abraham are unrepentant and unbelieving, he would raise up from stones children who would believe and repent. Baptism is John's new sign of belonging to the true people of God for Jew and Gentile, based on individual repentance and faith.

In Baptism, Jesus identified with the humanity he came to save. Jesus cannot die in our place unless he identifies with us. He cannot take humanity's judgement unless he is human. Jesus identifying with us begins with him undergoing John's baptism of repentance for sin, the repentance that all humankind needs to undergo for salvation.

Baptism symbolises us dying in Christ. We sometimes see baptism as washing us clean of sin, but the image is stronger than that. By being immersed in water in baptism we symbolically drown, we die to sin. Baptism shows that all Christians have died with Christ to sin, so can't go on willfully sinning. Dead people do not sin. In our New Testament reading, Paul assumes that the Roman believers were all baptized, and he was simply reminding them what it stood for. It was a universal, defining experience in the early church, and every church must take baptism seriously and practice it faithfully.

Finally, Baptism is the decisive, public way of taking a Christian stand in the New Testament. God calls each of us today to repent and believe in Christ alone for salvation and to receive the new sign of the new covenant of the people of God: the sign of repentance and faith, which is baptism. God calls on every one of you who has not followed Christ in this way, to "Repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38). It is the call of God. It is the path of obedience and life. The message Peter gave in Acts 2 ended with the words, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38), so baptism is the decisive public way for people to respond publicly to the gospel in faith.

In conclusion, in being baptised, we signify our repentance and faith, and that God is completing, even perfecting, the mission he started in the Old Testament, so save all his people from the judgement they deserve for their sin. In so doing, gain eternal life the way originally intended, imperfect relationship with each other, with creation and with God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Have you, in repentance and faith, been baptised in obedience to God's command, as Jesus was in identifying with us? If you have, then you have died with Christ to sin, so live as the people of God in the sure hope of eternal life. If not, please talk to me after the service about being baptised, and publicly and decisively demonstrating your repentance and faith.

Amen