**Genesis 1:1-5; Ps 29, Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11 The Baptism of Christ**

**10th January 2021 Revd Peter Jones**

‘The Baptism of Christ’: The Sunday in the church calendar set aside for remembering that important day. Our four readings are all selected to help us understand the importance of that day.

If I may, I would suggest that it be good to pause here, and read the four passages before continuing. **Genesis 1:1-5; Ps 29, Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11 (I have included them below for your convenience).** They are all relatively short passages, and reading them will help you understand the magnitude of the events described.

The Genesis 1 reading leads us off with the awesome words:

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

There is no mistaking that God is in charge, and He is the creator. Everything, including us was created by Him.

Very quickly, in verse 3, we are introduced to the second person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, as we are told that: “The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

Within these first few verses we are introduced to the themes of the Lord’s creation, His power and glory being made present for all to see and experience, and know the work of the Holy Spirit.

We now turn to Psalm 29 where we read how King David calls the heavenly beings to ‘Ascribe’ to the Lord various attributes. The word ‘Ascribe’ means to assign, or the credit to [God], to associate [God] with the following things. In this case, it is to associate God with glory and the splendour of holiness, the image of being clothed with holiness and glory.

But David is not finished. He goes on to speak of the “voice of the LORD is over the waters”. This takes us straight back to Genesis and the creation, where the Holy Spirit hovers over the waters. We are encouraged to see the glory of God in the sounds and the voice of thunder. The Lord’s voice is powerful and full of majesty, shaking the wilderness. His voice even affects those in his temple who then cry out “Glory” in their worship of him.

And now, whilst we hold those images in our mind, we come to the baptism narrative in Mark’s Gospel. John the Baptist has been preparing the way, baptising with water as a symbolic act of repentance and realignment with God. But he points forward to the one who will come, who will baptise with the Holy Spirit of God, the same Holy Spirit of creation who shows us the glory of God and the voice of God.

Jesus arrives and was baptised by John, even though he didn’t need to be baptised because Jesus was pure and perfectly in his relationship with God the Father.

As he comes up out of the water, the Spirit of God descends on him and the heavens are visibly, gloriously and magnificently torn open. And then at that awe inspiring moment, the voice of God came from heaven with that same power and glory that King David in his Psalm wrote about:

“You are my beloved Son,

with you I am well pleased.” Mark 1:11

This is a defining moment in history.

The shepherds had recognised the glory of God in the Christ child.

The wise men had worshipped this same child and offered gifts fit for a king.

Those present that day at Jesus’ baptism, experienced the power of God’s words.

We, in reading of these events are to ascribe to Jesus the glory and voice of God to him, we also are to cry out in response and recognise His glory and the splendour of Jesus’ holiness.

When we find ourselves fearful of the circumstances around us and are feeling loneliness and isolation dominating us, then we can bring to mind the glory of God present amongst us.

When we have been baptised into his name, and take hold of that truth for ourselves, then God’s glory, His Holy Spirit comes to live in us, and we are never truly lonely again. For God’s glory is present within us, working (if we will let and encourage the Spirit of God to do so) to make us more human, more loving, more capable to love and forgive. We are more able to ask God to shape our lives to be more like Jesus’s and less like the sinful, rebellious creatures the human race has been since the ‘fall’ at the start of Genesis.

He has the power, and a love so great for us that it can set us free, to be lifted high by Him so that we may fly like on the wings of eagles.

We may be rescued from this Covid-19 virus by the new vaccines, and the isolations, and hand washing rules. They are all vitally important at the moment, as is holding back from going into one another’s homes. But God’s glory and His rescue of us is seen so powerfully in Jesus, the Son of God, in whom the Father is “well pleased”. It is an eternal rescue and not just for this year or a few years to come.

As Psalm 29 finishes:

“May the Lord give strength to his people!

May the Lord bless his people with peace!”

He does this through His Son Jesus Christ and the Work of the Holy Spirit. And this is my prayer for you: For the Lord to strengthen you, his people, and to bless you with his peace.

Amen