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**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION**

**SUNDAY 9 JANUARY 2022 - Baptism of Christ (1st of Epiphany)**

**COLLECT**

Heavenly Father,

at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son:

may we recognize him as our Lord

and know ourselves to be your beloved children;

through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

**Psalm 29**

1    Ascribe to the Lord, you powers of heaven,  ♦

ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

2    Ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name;  ♦

worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

3    The voice of the Lord is upon the waters;

the God of glory thunders;  ♦

the Lord is upon the mighty waters.

4    The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation;  ♦

the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice.

5    The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees;  ♦

the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;

6    He makes Lebanon skip like a calf  ♦

and Sirion like a young wild ox.

7    The voice of the Lord splits the flash of lightning;

the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness;  ♦

the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

8    The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe

and strips the forests bare;  ♦

in his temple all cry, ‘Glory!’

9    The Lord sits enthroned above the water flood;  ♦

the Lord sits enthroned as king for evermore.

10  The Lord shall give strength to his people;  ♦

the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

**Acts 8: 14-17**

**14**Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. **15**The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit **16**(for as yet the Spirit had not come[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+8%3A14-17&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-27182a)] upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). **17**Then Peter and John[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+8%3A14-17&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-27183b)] laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

**Luke 3: 15-17, 21, 22**

**15**As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+3%3A15-22&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-25033a)] **16**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[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+3%3A15-22&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-25034b)] the Holy Spirit and fire. **17**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.’

### The Baptism of Jesus

**21**Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, **22**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;[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+3%3A15-22&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-25040d)] with you I am well pleased.’[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+3%3A15-22&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-25040e)]

***A Reflection from Hannah…***

Who are we?! This question often feels particularly prescient at the start of a new year. As we make our resolutions, and behold those of others (have you noticed how many joggers are out on 1st January?!), we play with that question of identity. What kind of person are we, and what kind of person do we want to become?

Just as is the case for Jesus, in baptism we receive our true identity, and it doesn’t come from any decision, resolve, resolution or determination for self-improvement on our part; it comes as a gift from God. As the heavens crack open and the dove descends, God says:

‘You are my son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased.’

The naming of Jesus as God’s son is the beginning- out of an understanding of who he is, and who gives him that name, everything follows. The same is true for us, as 1 John 3 puts it: ‘Beloved, now we are children of God.’ It’s good at the start of a new year to receive the account of the baptism of Christ afresh, and to notice that it is God who names us and gives us meaning. The world around us is full of competing identities, and we can so easily forget our human dignity in the midst of all the noise. We are variously labelled consumer, constituent, citizen, vulnerable, elderly, teenager, kid, vaccinated, unvaccinated, LF positive, PCR negative, neurodiverse, liberal, conservative, migrant, immigrant, refugee…. The list goes on, and has only grown during the past two years.

Before anything else (even things like age, gender, qualifications, nationality, sexuality) we are a child of God, united with God and with each other through our common baptism. A baptism we share with Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we continue to live in today. As we recall that, it gives us an opportunity to pray afresh for the waters of baptism to cleanse us- to let the falsehoods die and the truth grow and to be open to the unfolding work of God in our lives.

You may remember that the second part of the verse from 1 John 3 is ‘and what we will be has not yet been revealed’. It is not finished! There is excitement and unknowing as we journey onwards. We will not remain the same- but it is God who changes us for the better, who moulds us, recreates us and draws us onwards as beloved children of the one through whom everything lives and moves and has its being.

So as a challenge this week- look in the mirror and force yourself to say ‘you are my child, my beloved’, and give thanks to God, because you are. Then look at those around you- who we meet, who we see on the telly, who we read about, who we like or dislike, who we struggle to relate to or who we find so very easy- and say it of them too.