

## **John Part 2: Jesus baptised**

Sermon by Silvia Purdie

Verse for the day: John 1:29. The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Prayer for the day

Father of all, you poured out your Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism, fill us again with your holy fire, that we might live and serve to your glory, amen.

Bible reading: Isaiah 33:2-6, 10-14

Gospel Matthew 3: 11-17

SERMON: John and Jesus

Questions:

1. What happened that day?
2. What was the relationship between John and Jesus?
3. What did John hope for from Jesus?
4. Why was he disappointed?

Picture the scene:

There's John standing in the river. He has finished with the last group of people come for baptism that day, and he is preaching, all fired up still but to be honest looking a bit tired, until he suddenly stops in mid sentence. Everyone leans forward to see – what's happening? John is standing still, looking intently ... at a man, walking towards him down the bank into the river. Nothing obviously different about this man, he's just another man come for baptism except John seems shocked, shaken. Then he rushes through the water towards him, his long hair sending splashes of water and catching the late afternoon light.

John seems to be trying to stop the man from coming into the river. He's upset. 'No', 'Please no' he cries out.

Now the crowd is highly intrigued – John has never done this before. Who is this man? Why does John not welcome him?

Then John kneels in the water and in the dead silence of the crowd everyone can hear him say "I need to be baptized by you! Why do you come to me!?"

And the man pulls John to his feet and embraces him in a hug of old friends, and replies, "Come on, cousin. It needs to be this way. This is God's will, God's righteousness, God's place for you and I in the work to be done."

Then together they walk into the deep part of the river, and John pushes the man under the water with a strange cry.

And as he stands up the whole crowd leaps to their feet for there is a flash of light out of the sky, maybe a roll of thunder, maybe the very voice of God and later many people swear that they heard the words, "This is my Son, my beloved, who brings me great joy."

So, what do you make of that then? It was certainly a significant day for Jesus. It was a marker for him, an amazing experience, surely, for Jesus, and for John, the ending of Jesus' old life as a carpenter, the completion of a relationship – maybe the opening of a door within Jesus so that from now on he knew utterly the Father, he lived fully conscious of God, he worked completely out of the love and power of the creator of the universe. This moment forged the Trinity in a radical new way. From before the beginnings of time God was Father Son and Spirit but now in this moment Father Son and Spirit was tangible, visible, completely present without restraint or compromise.

This moment, the baptism of Jesus, caused a few headaches and arguments for the early church. The Jews, you see, claimed that because Jesus had been baptized by John he was a disciple of John, and that John was the greater of the two.

And the Greek Gnostics on the other hand argued that if Jesus was perfect and without sin then surely he did not need to be baptized at all?

Another 50 years after our 4 Gospels were written the other versions of the story wrote that Jesus hadn't actually been baptized by John. Even John's gospel fudges it – he just writes that John 'saw Jesus coming towards him', he doesn't actually say that Jesus was baptized. It had become an inconvenient truth.

What is agreed on by all accounts is that there is a continuity between John's ministry and Jesus'. There is a continuity between the baptism of John and baptism in the name of Jesus. Jesus deliberately stepped close

to John, affirmed the message and ministry of John the Baptist, and aligned himself with John.

But then Jesus set off in a different direction.

John's ministry had a huge influence in first century Israel. A hundred years later people were still being baptized with John's baptism. Like Jesus, John called disciples and appointed leaders, and they continued his work after he was arrested and killed. Unlike Jesus, this ministry was exclusively within the Jewish community, and it gradually faded out. Jesus never had a bad word to say about John. He always spoke of John with respect.

John, on the other hand, was less supportive of the direction that Jesus took, and became increasingly, openly critical of Jesus as time went on, until we get to what is quite possibly the sadness question in the whole Bible.

John had high hopes for Jesus. John saw, through the Holy Spirit, the intimacy between Jesus and the Father. John knew that Jesus was the One that he had been waiting for, that Israel had been waiting for. What a thrill for John! He had come! and it was his cousin Jesus, of all people!

We need to pause for a mo and get our heads around what John hoped for from Jesus. It's there in that prophecy about the threshing floor. Let me read it again:

verses 11-12

When farmers harvested the grain they piled it onto a threshing floor. This was like an outdoor concrete pad. Then there were two jobs to be done – a bit like shearing sheep actually. One job is the shearing the sheep, the other job is the sorting and packing of the wool, sweeping away the dags into the rubbish. Has anyone here been part of a shearing gang or watched them work?

Anyway, back to the threshing ... one person had a threshing fork, and his job was to toss the grain into the air. The wind would blow away the chaff and the grain would fall back down. Tough work, over and over, dig, lift, throw, in the warm dry wind.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> person had a winnowing fork. It was his job to rake the grain into a neat pile and get the grain into the sack. The chaff that swirled in the wind he raked up and gathered it in armfuls into buckets ready to throw on the fire to be burnt.

John saw himself as the thresher. He was sorting the wheat from the chaff, calling people into the True Israel.

He pictured Jesus coming along after him to gather up the wheat and destroy the chaff. The Messiah would clean up the threshing floor, restore Israel ... which logically would mean getting rid of the Romans for a start, and getting rid of all those who chose unrighteousness, power, sin and personal gain.

I'm not sure quite how John pictured this happening, but for John this was a coming reality, for Israel, through the Messiah.

That's what he means by a baptism of Holy Spirit and fire – Holy Spirit for the purified and righteous, fire for the unrighteous.

Jesus spoke in similar ways in his parables. But Jesus lived this out in a very different way from what John was hoping for.

## COMMUNION: JESUS' BAPTISM

The Lord is here

**God's Spirit is with us.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to offer thanks and praise.**

We are here in your name, we are here in your presence,  
giving you thanks, giving your praise,  
holy God, almighty Father.

We are here dry and dusty, weary with the world, hungry for your  
touch.

Living water, flow through us

Bread of life, feed us

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and  
earth is full of Your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

You formed the earth from nothing, you are the source of all life. From  
your great love you shaped a people, you called a people to know you  
and live from the very heart of God.

We are here to confess that we have damaged your earth, we have  
betrayed your love.

Call us again, almighty God, out of your great mercy. Let us hear again  
your voice, your word to us. Tell us again who we are in you.

Friends, hear again the word of God spoken to Jesus on the day of his  
baptism: "This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased."  
Jesus has invited us into the infinite and boundless love of the Father for  
the Son and the Son for the Father, and so I invite you to hear this voice  
spoken over you:

"This is my daughter, whom I love, with her I am well pleased."

"This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased."

We respond with praise:

**Blessing, honour and glory be yours,**

**here and everywhere, now and forever. Amen**

Glory and thanks to you, living Father, for Jesus.  
On the night before he died  
he gathered his friends around him, ate and drank with them. He took  
bread and when he had given you thanks,  
he broke it gave it to his disciples, and said:  
"Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you.  
Do this to remember me."

After supper he took the cup;  
When he had given you thanks he gave it to them and said:  
"Drink this, all of you,  
for this is my blood of the new covenant  
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins;  
do this as often as you drink it to remember me."

Come, Holy Spirit, that this bread will be to us the very Bread of Life  
Come, Holy Spirit, that this wine will be for us the very Blood of our  
saviour Jesus Christ as we share it together  
forgiveness for sin  
new life in a dying world  
peace for troubled hearts  
hope for the world.  
Come, Holy Spirit, bring us to Jesus.  
Amen.

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ

Draw near and receive the body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ in  
remembrance that he died for us. Let us feed on him in our hearts by  
faith with thanksgiving.

*After Communion ...*

Father of all,  
we give you thanks and praise,  
for your love drew us in  
through your Son Jesus Christ.

Dying and living,  
he showed us your face,  
gave us grace,  
and opened the gate of glory.

**May we who share Christ's body  
live his risen life;  
we who drink his cup  
bring life to others;  
we whom the Spirit lights  
give light to the world.  
Amen**