

**Sermon St. James, Cambridge - Baptism of Christ, 13 January 2013**  
**The Revd Jutta Brueck**

**Isaiah 43.1-7**

**Ps. 29**

**Acts 8.14-17**

**Luke 3.15-17,21-22**

*“You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”*

(The Baptism of Christ is an opportunity to remind ourselves that for us, too, our Baptism is central to our identity).

*As part of the Penitential rite, water was blessed, using the following words, and the people were sprinkled.*

**Blessing of Water** *(at the Baptismal Font)*

Thankful for the baptism that gives us new life  
yet mindful of our lack of trust and our unfaithfulness,  
we ask God to bless this water.

*Water is poured into the font*

God, our Creator,

your gift of water brings life and freshness to the earth;

In baptism it is a sign of our adoption as your beloved children and the gift of eternal life.

Sanctify this water, we pray.

Renew the living spring of your life within us,

that we may be free from sin and fear

And filled with your saving health;

through Jesus Christ our brother and Lord.

**Amen.**

*Sprinkling with water*

*Followed by the Absolution.*

**The Sermon**

Normally, we are sprinkled with Baptismal water at Easter – and that’s appropriate and fitting, and will happen again this Easter, but the Baptism of Christ presents a great opportunity to think about our own Baptism and it’s significance in our lives. Although we know that Baptism

is really important – it's at the heart of who we are - do we live everyday with the awareness that we are children of God – that every day God looks upon us as 'his beloved Son or daughter'?

Do you wake up thinking something like 'I am God's beloved daughter/son' – God's Spirit is at work in me – let's see what the day holds?' I have to confess – most of the time, but maybe this sermon is going to make a difference to me!

Baptism is at the heart of who we are and where we are going.

If we believe that we are 'reborn by the Holy Spirit' – that, just like Jesus at his baptism, we too, have received the Holy Spirit, then baptism must be central to our lives. In the Baptism Service the prayer for the newly baptised person is: *'may God... pour upon you the riches of his grace, that within the company of Christ's pilgrim people you may daily be renewed by God's anointing Spirit'*. Do we trust this? Do we live with the awareness that God's Holy Spirit is with us daily calling us, enabling us to live as God's children to be instruments of God's love?

I guess for most of us it takes a life-time of practice and prayer, we need to remind ourselves that this is the case.

Jesus' baptism happened at the start of his public ministry, as he was living out his vocation. At that point, he received the affirmation that God's Holy Spirit is with him and that he was God's beloved child. In both Luke's and Mark's version of the story, the voice from heaven speaks to Jesus in the first person: *"You are my Son, the beloved; with you I am well pleased."*

This tangible sign of God's presence is given to Jesus at this crucial point in his life equipping him for what lies ahead.

Our lives, too, are about realising our unique calling as part of the family God's beloved children.

Whatever else is going on in our lives; however fragile or inadequate we may feel – you and I are God’s beloved children, irrespective of how young or old we are; irrespective of whether we’ve got a job or not; irrespective of whether we are seen to be successful or not. We belong to God’s family, we are precious in God’s sight and baptism is the tangible sign of that.

We stand at the beginning of a New Year, and I imagine that in the last two weeks most of us have spent time reflecting on the year that has passed and what may lie ahead. There will be have been good times and difficult time, things we are proud of and things we regret, joys and sadness. We may emerge from Advent and Christmas more in touch with our longings and hopes. We may have made new resolutions, but we may also be disillusioned about what is possible and what isn’t.

Today, we are reminded that as children of God we don’t live out of our own strength.

Tom Wright, (*Luke for everyone*, p.41) puts this well in his commentary on Luke’s gospel:

*‘...the baptism story(which is followed by the) family tree tell us where Jesus has come from, who he is, and where he is going. As we make his story our own in our prayers, and indeed in our own baptism, **we too should expect both the fresh energy of the Spirit and the quiet voice which reminds us of God’s amazing, affirming love and of the path of vocation which lies ahead.** (repeat)*

Hear this in conjunction with the Old Testament lesson this morning, the much loved passage from the prophet Isaiah:

*Thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, o Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.*

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you.*

At the beginning of a New Year we are here today with hopes and fears, with people and situations we carry on our hearts and minds.

As members of God's family – we are not alone on our journey - but the opposite is true: we can trust God to be with us whatever may lie ahead.

We expect God to give us people who will be alongside us in our joys and sorrows - sometimes they will feel like angels.

We can expect God to ask us to reach out to others who are in need and to make a real difference in the world.

We can expect God to nudge us to do things and to make decisions that feel challenging.

We can expect to be daily renewed by the Holy Spirit.

***Prayer (using Tom Wright's words)***

Holy Spirit, at the start of this New Year, as we remember Christ's baptism and ours, help us to expect and notice both the fresh energy you give us and the quiet voice which reminds us of God's affirming love and of the path of vocation which lies ahead. Amen.