

Order for Worship at Kangaroo Flat – 10th January 2021
Theme - Baptism of Jesus

Greeting:

Call to Worship:

Welcome to worship everyone.

We recognise that we meet on and share Dja Dja Wurrung land as we come here today.

**We also recognise that our church is a safe place
for all people to worship regardless of race, creed,
cultural background or sexual identity.**

We have arrived in church together,
some with a rush, some more leisurely.

Let us worship in spirit and in truth.

May the Spirit of God assist us today
as we give yourselves to God,

Give to God the glory and praise that is your duty and delight,

May the Lord give renewed strength to his people,

May our Christ bless us all with his peace.

HYMN: tis 164

**The great love of God
is revealed in the Son,
who came to this earth
to redeem every one.**

**That love, like a stream
flowing clear to the sea,
makes clean every heart
that from sin would be free.**

**It binds the whole world,
every barrier it breaks,
the hills it lays low,
and the mountains it shakes.**

**It's yours, it is ours
O how lavishly giv'n!
the pearl of great price,
and the treasure of heav'n.**

PRAYER: *(Together)*

God of love,
we adore you who created us and who sustains us,
who has loved us with love greater than a tsunami wave.

Jesus Christ, our Lord, we adore you
who became one of us,
suffered with us, died and was raised to new life
and now leads us to new life.

Holy Spirit of God, we adore you
whose wisdom teaches us,
whose fellowship unites us
whose power enables us
whose life blesses us. In the name of Christ. Amen

Let's sit for a moment in silence
in the presence of this awesome God.

Loving God,
we confess that we are not all you created us to be:
sometimes we do things that destroy your great name;
sometimes we do not do the things we know are right.
We are sorry. Please forgive us as you have promised,
and help us to begin living in a new way. Amen.

AFFIRMATION:

Nothing escapes the notice of God, not even a sparrow falling to the ground.
As one song says, *"No feather too light, no hair too fine, no flower too brief in its' glory, no drop in the ocean, no dust in the air, but is counted and told in God's story"*.

So too, God notices every heart-felt sorrow, every desire to be set free. God rejoices and forgives through Jesus Christ.
Thanks be to God. **Thanks be to God.**

EARLY WORD:

INTRODUCTION TO READINGS:

Genesis 1:1-5 (NRSV)

¹In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

SONG: TIS 156

**Morning has broken
like the first morning;
blackbird has spoken
like the first bird.
Praise for the singing,
praise for the morning,
praise for them springing
fresh from the word.**

**Sweet the rain's new fall
sunlit from heaven,
like the first dewfall
on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness
of the wet garden,
sprung from completeness
where his feet pass.**

**Mine is the sunlight;
mine is the morning
born of the one light
Eden saw play.
Praise with elation,
praise every morning,
God's recreation
of the new day.**

Eleanor Farjeon 1881-1965

BIBLE READINGS:

Mark 1:4-11:

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Acts 19:1-7:

¹While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. ²He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?” They replied, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” ³Then he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They answered, “Into John’s baptism.” ⁴Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.” ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied— ⁷altogether there were about twelve of them.

The windows of heaven are open, whether we realise it or not.

The Spirit is moving like a dove whether we welcome her or not.

This is the new age of Christ whether we serve it or not.

This is the hour of salvation, whether we celebrate it or not.

**May we catch a glimpse of that Light and Love that transforms our days
with a beauty not of our making. Through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen!**

SONG: ATE 218

Refrain

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,

Blow through the wilderness, calling and free.

Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,

Stir me from placidness, wind, wind on the sea.

**You moved on the waters, you called to the deep,
Then you coaxed up the mountains from the valleys of sleep;
And over the aeons you called to each thing;
Wake from your slumbers and rise on your wings. Refrain**

**You swept through the desert, you stung with the sand,
And you goaded your people with a law and a land;
And when they were blinded by their idols and lies,
Then you spoke through your prophets to open their eyes. Refrain**

**You sang in a stable, you cried from a hill,
Then you whispered in silence when the whole world was still;
And down in the city you called once again,
When you blew through your people on the rush of the wind. Refrain**

**You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes,
From the bondage of sorrow the captives dream dreams;
Our women see visions, our men clear their eyes;
With bold new decisions your people arise. Refrain**

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SERMON:

Baptism happens with water. However, I water my plants, but that is not baptism. We give the kids a bath or a shower, but that is not baptism. I wash my car, occasionally, but I couldn't say it is baptism. I get caught in the rain sometimes, but that is not baptism. If we get enough rain the countryside floods, but that is not baptism either.

So, what makes getting wet a baptism? It's about God getting into the act somehow. Today's scriptures remind us that the gift of God's Holy Spirit is what makes baptism real. When Jesus came up out of the water after John baptised him it says the heavens were torn apart like a lightning strike and the Holy Spirit came down upon him. Then a voice from heaven announces, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." It's a very dramatic picture. The Greek word for the heavens being "torn apart" is skizo. The only other place Mark uses the word "skizo" is at Jesus death when the huge curtain of the temple is said to "skizo", TEAR from top to bottom. Mark is probably making a link right at the beginning of his story to show that Jesus baptism is also linked to his death and resurrection.

Above all, Mark wants us to hear the epiphany where God "spoke" after Jesus was baptised. Jesus is affirmed to be God's beloved Son. Jesus is accepted, and his identity and worth are confirmed and loved.

In Acts 19, the early Christians discover that when they are baptised with water in the name of the Lord Jesus the Holy Spirit comes upon them in a way that didn't happen when John baptised them.

Even though it is not a baptism story, in the first creation story in Genesis 1, the Holy Spirit hovers over the dark, chaotic waters the *tohu wa-bohu (Tahhula bohu)*. and brings light and new life. The quote "wind from God" is a symbol of the Holy Spirit through the Bible.

As one song puts it: *"She sits like a bird, brooding on the waters,
Hovering on the chaos of the world's first day;
She sighs and she sings, mothering creation,
Waiting to give birth to all the Word will say".*

This Spirit of God is seen in many other stories through the Bible, particularly when leaders were anointed for their role. Following the same tradition, Jesus baptism is also an anointing for his life as God's Messiah.

Jesus baptism is linked to many other biblical stories. It can be seen as part of his incarnation that we have remembered at Christmas – God becoming part of human life. Any sense of God being separated from humanity is ended. Even though Mark doesn't tell the story of Jesus birth he makes it clear that this anointing of Jesus is from God and not from human actions.

The details in the story of Jesus baptism are not to be seen so much as factual, or as history, but are linked to other stories of how the Hebrew people had experienced God in their past.

One story that is central to Hebrew faith is the story of the Exodus, when Moses led the Hebrew people through the Jordan River to escape captivity in Egypt and on a subsequent journey to freedom and life as God's people. Jesus baptism also takes place in the Jordan River, and it is also the beginning of a new life for God's people. Jesus baptism, and the voice, seems to glorify him as the Son of God, special, chosen. However later in Mark, Jesus GLORY will be seen in his death and resurrection. Jesus baptism points to the Easter event. When Jesus disciples were seeking their own glory and rewards, he asks them, "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and receive the baptism with which I am baptized?" (10:39). In Mark. the theme of baptism links from 1:9 through to 10:45, where the disciples constantly misunderstand, that following Jesus means not a life of ease, but a willingness to serve and to give our life for others. That's also what it means for us to follow Jesus now. God's affirmation of Jesus is a perpetual reminder of what is expected from us. Mark sees Jesus baptism as the place where Jesus greatness is acknowledged. It is also the beginning of Jesus ministry. This story encourages all of us as hearers to place our faith and hope in Jesus as God's chosen. It challenges us to put our faith in Jesus when we go through our tough times with illness or bereavement, when we worry about Corona Virus, climate change or jobs, or our children's future.

Jesus baptism is a CHALLENGE to us. His baptism shows the deep love of God. It challenges us as sons and daughters of God to also seek this deep love of God in our own lives. Is that possible? I think it is. Whether we find that deep love of God does not depend on our skills, senses or morality, or even our faith. It is always a GIFT. It can come out of the blue as it did for Jesus, or it can grow gradually over the years as we worship. All WE can do is be ready for it, to be open to that gift in our own life. It needs to be something we long for and look for.

Just as Jesus baptism heralded the start of his life and ministry as God's chosen one, so our baptism in Jesus name puts expectations on us to share in Jesus work of bringing things like love, joy, justice and mercy to the world around us. It means to find ways to heal, rather than wound millions in wars, and to get along with people rather than stirring up racial or other conflict. It's about being forgiving and merciful, rather than trying to get even with people who hurt us. Jesus baptism needs to be remembered and celebrated. We need it, and the world needs it.

Rev Ralph Clarke

PRAYER *(Together)*

Baptise us, loving God, not just once with water but continually with your Holy Spirit. Saturate every congregation with your buoyant grace, that worship may be a time of liberty, hope and joy.

Immerse our daily lives in the love of Christ Jesus, that our deeds, words and attitudes may declare your praise.

Through this same Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit are to be loved and enjoyed forever! Amen!

AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM:

Friends, we stand here as one community of God in Christ.
God's mighty acts of salvation for us and all people
are gracious gifts, freely given,
gifts for living,
gifts for our mission as people of God
gifts to bring love and peace in the world.
Today, we give thanks for the baptism of Jesus,
and all that can mean in our life.

THE APOSTLES CREED:

Let us confess the faith of the church universal into which we are baptised in the name of Christ.

Do you believe in God who made you and loves you?

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ your Saviour and Lord?

**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 again;
He ascended into heaven,
He is seated at the right hand of the father,
And he will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit and the continuing work of our salvation?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
The holy catholic church,
The communion of saints,
The forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body,
And the life everlasting. Amen.**

(The minister may let water run in the name of the Trinity saying.)

Remember your Baptism and be thankful that with Jesus Christ, you share the grace of God and the strength of the Holy Spirit.

As we remember our baptism, I invite you to say after me:

We place our hands in yours Lord. **We place our hands in yours Lord.**
We place our will in yours Lord. **We place our will in yours Lord.**

We place our days in yours Lord. **We place our days in yours Lord.**
We place our thoughts in yours Lord. **We place our thoughts in yours Lord.**

OFFERING PRAYER:

NOTICES, JOYS & CONCERNS:

PRAYERS for OTHERS:

**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 in the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

SONG: TIS 779 'A Christmas Blessing'

**May the feet of God walk with you,
and his hand hold you tight.
May the eye of God rest on you,
and his ear hear your cry.
May the smile of God be for you,
and his breath give you life.
May the child of God grow in you,
and his love bring you home.**

Robin Mann 1949-

BLESSING:

You have been baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.
You are blessed.
Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength.
Go in the strength of God's Spirit
to love and serve the world.

In the name of Christ. Amen

SONG: TIS 778

**Shalom to you now, shalom, my friends.
May God's full mercies bless you, my friends.
In all your living and through your loving,
Christ be your Shalom, Christ be your shalom.**

Elise Shoemaker Eslinger 1942-