

Welshpool & Bro Hafren Methodist Circuit

Home Worship Sheet, 10th January

This short act of worship has been prepared and written for you by Rev Bill Rowell.

May God guide us in our worship in our praise and prayer, and in our hearing of his holy word.

Amen.

Hymn: When Jesus came to Jordan

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the hymn. (The hymn starts after 20 secs.)

- 1 **When Jesus came to Jordan
to be baptised by John,
he did not come for pardon,
but as the sinless one.
He came to share repentance
with all who mourn their sins,
to speak the vital sentence
with which good news begins.**

- 2 **He came to share temptation,
our utmost woe and loss,
for us and our salvation
to die upon the cross.
So when the Dove descended
on him, the Son of Man,
the hidden years had ended,
the age of grace began.**

- 3 **Come, Holy Spirit, aid us
to keep the vows we make;
this very day invade us,
and every bondage break.**

Come, give our lives direction,
the gift we covet most:
to share the resurrection
that leads to Pentecost

Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000)

Theme Prayer:

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.

Seeking God's mercy and forgiveness:

The grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all. Let us come to him, in sorrow for our sins, seeking healing and salvation.

Friend of sinners, you bring hope in our despair –

Lord, have mercy: **Lord, have mercy.**

Healer of the sick, you give strength in our weakness –

Christ, have mercy: **Christ, have mercy.**

Destroyer of evil, you bring life in our dying –

Lord, have mercy: **Lord, have mercy.**

May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw us to himself and cleanse us from all our sins, that we may behold the glory of his Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

God's Word - Acts, chapter 1, verses 1 to 11:

To listen to an alternative NIV reading of this passage by David Suchett, from BibleGateway, in a new tab press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the reading.

In the first part of my work, Theophilus, I gave an account of all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. To these men he showed himself after his death and gave ample proof that he was alive: he was seen by

them over a period of forty days and spoke to them about the kingdom of God.

While he was in their company he directed them not to leave Jerusalem. 'You must wait', he said, 'for the gift promised by the Father, of which I told you; John, as you know, baptized with water, but within the next few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

When they were all together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time at which you are to restore sovereignty to Israel?' He answered, 'It is not for you to know about dates or times which the Father has set within his own control. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will bear witness for me in Jerusalem, and throughout all Judaea and Samaria, and even in the farthest corners of the earth.'

After he had said this, he was lifted up before their very eyes, and a cloud took him from their sight. They were gazing intently into the sky as he went, and all at once there stood beside them two men robed in white, who said, 'Men of Galilee, why stand there looking up into the sky? This Jesus who has been taken from you up to heaven will come in the same way as you have seen him go.'

Mark, chapter 1, verses 4 to 11 :

To listen to an alternative NIV reading of this passage by David Suchett, from BibleGateway, in a new tab press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the reading.

John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness proclaiming a baptism in token of repentance, for the forgiveness of sins; and everyone flocked to him from the countryside of Judaea and the city of Jerusalem, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. John was dressed in a rough coat of camel's hair, with a leather belt round his waist, and he fed on locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed: 'After me comes one mightier than I am, whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and unfasten. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

It was at this time that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. As he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens break open and the Spirit descend on him, like a

dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my beloved Son; in you I take delight.'

May God bless to our use these readings of his holy word.

Amen.

Reflection on the Readings

We don't know whether Theophilus, to whom Luke addresses his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, is an actual person. His name means "Lover of God," so this could just be Luke's shorthand for all those who would be reading his words.

Luke begins the book of Acts by describing to Theophilus the event we call the Ascension. Jesus takes leave of his disciples, but first he gives them some final teaching, including making a distinction between the baptism of John, using water, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is for this baptism of the Spirit the apostles are now to wait in Jerusalem. But as our Gospel reading reminds us, John the Baptist had himself made the same distinction; as he baptized the crowds who came out to hear him in the wilderness, he pointed beyond himself to the one for whom he was preparing the way, and told them: "I baptize you with water," he said, "but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

And then Jesus himself joins the crowds, identifies himself with this new movement of faith, and comes to be baptized by John. And we are told of the presence of the Holy Spirit descending like a dove to rest upon him. I wonder how often we are aware of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit at services of baptism or christening in our churches? Often we are baptizing infants and children, and we may not be very sure about the faith of their parents and sponsors. We speak of the Holy Spirit in our readings and prayers and declarations, but is that as far as it goes?

Should be thinking of one baptism, which has to do with water, and then another which is to do with the Spirit? No, that has never been the doctrine of the Church. All the member churches of the World Council of Churches and the British Council of Churches share a stated belief in "one baptism", and though they may do baptism in different ways, and have different views on, for example, the baptism of infants, in the end

all the main churches accept the principle that there is one baptism, wherever and however it's done.

So if there is one baptism - and Paul writes this in Ephesians, chapter 4: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." If that's the case, then clearly there must be more to baptism than just the ceremony or ritual or event. There is an event, involving washing with water - and that event somehow affirms us as members of the body of Christ which is the Church. Declarations are made, perhaps by the person being baptized, and perhaps by others on behalf of a child too young to answer for him or herself. But then there is also what God offers - of himself, of his power, of his love, of his Spirit.

And what God offers us isn't given automatically, just because we do the washing with water or say words about the Holy Spirit. It has to do with an ongoing process from that point, of engagement and discovery. It may take time, maybe a lot of time. Indeed, it may never happen, for God doesn't force his way into our lives, but allows us the freedom not to engage, not to even ask, perhaps. So for me, to speak of baptism is always about that process of becoming who and what God wants us to be, it's never just the event that starts that process off. Being baptized is a lifelong process, in which there will always be more to discover, more to know, more to receive, and more to give, as we journey on in faith.

It was even like that for those first disciples. They waited in Jerusalem for the promised gift of the Spirit, and were literally knocked off their feet when that gift was given. We read about the first Christian day of Pentecost, and are enthralled to see how almost immediately these men were able to minister and teach, with joy and power and authority. But they were by no means the finished article, with nothing more to learn or be challenged by. They still had things to learn, there were still mistakes they would make, there would still be things they'd need to repent of and put right in their lives. The Spirit will lead you into all truth, Jesus had promised them - but not all in one go, it's still, for everyone, an ongoing process of discovery.

Being baptized begins a process of discovering new things about God, and about the wonders of his grace; and it begins a process of

discovering new things about ourselves, and who and what we are called to be, under God. Our baptism testifies to God's gracious response to our sin and our need for a new start. But - as it was that day for Jesus in the river Jordan - baptism is also a point of commissioning - and God offers us the gift of his Spirit not just for our own joy and delight and wellbeing, but because we are called in his service, called to be witnesses, given things to do that are special to each of us, challenged to share his love and be lights in a dark world, and bringers of faith to those in doubt or despair.

So we are baptized so that that the work to which God commissioned Jesus as his Son, so that the work of redemption that only Jesus could do, can be continued and completed. To enable this, God promises to meet us with his Spirit, but he waits on our "yes". It's a big ask, but the victory is already won. Are we up for it? Baptism makes us what Jesus called his first disciples - his sisters and brothers.

A Statement of faith:

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love. We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high. We believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Hymn: Come, sinners, to the gospel feast

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the hymn.

- 1 **Come, sinners, to the gospel feast,
let every soul be Jesu's guest;
ye need not one be left behind,
for God has biddeth all mankind.**

- 2 **Sent by my Lord, on you I call,
the invitation is to all;
come, all the world! Come, sinner, thou!
all things in Christ are ready now.**

3 **Come, all ye souls by sin oppressed,
ye restless wanderers after rest,
ye poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind,
in Christ a hearty welcome find.**

4 **His love is mighty to compel;
his conquering love consent to feel;
yield to his love's resistless power,
and fight against your God no more.**

5 **This is the time; no more delay!
This is the Lord's accepted day;
come ye, this moment, at his call,
and live for him who died for all.**

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Prayers:

Heavenly Father, help us to be faithful to the promises made at our baptism, to follow in the steps of our Lord, and to share his love in acts of mercy and forgiveness. Help us to be open to the guiding and enabling power of your Holy Spirit, that we may truly be working with you, and that we may do so joyfully and lovingly.

We pray for the peace of the world, and for the welfare of all who are denied peace and freedom, and who are treated badly or exploited by others. We pray for all who hold high positions in government and society: Lord, help them to act with wisdom and to have the good of all in mind. We pray that everywhere the democratic institutions that preserve our freedom and peace may be honoured. And we pray for co-operation among nations in the struggle to counter the Covid virus, and for vaccines to be widely available.

Lord, hear our prayer for all who are ill, for their welfare and recovery. Bless the work of our local hospitals and health centres. We pray for the safety of staff, and for all involved in ensuring that those who are vulnerable receive the vaccination they need. We pray too for all whose wait for diagnosis and treatment has been made longer by the present crisis.

Lastly, Father, we pray for our families and friends, and for the life of our churches and communities. We pray for all who teach and instruct others, in our schools and colleges, and in apprenticeships and training schemes, and for all who are embarking on new courses of learning. And may we look out for each other through this testing time, and keep safe ourselves.

Lord, hear and received our prayers, which we make in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

**For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.**

Amen.

The Blessing:

May Christ the Light of the nations bring love and peace into every dark place; and may the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore.

Amen.

Hymn: I, the Lord of sea and sky

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press **Shift** and **Ctrl** together and click [here](#). the tab after the hymn. (Note: there is a 1 minute introduction.)

1 I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.

**I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?**

**Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.**

**2 I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain;
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?**

**Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.**

**3 I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts are satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?**

**Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.**