

This is why the baptism story can also be considered a Christmas story: it comes down to the same result as what happens on that silent night, holy night. In a single word, **EMMANUEL**. God with us. God for us. God among us.

God is for us all, down to the last and worst and ugliest sinner among us. And if God is for us, then who dares to be against us? So, joy to the world, the Lord has come! And if you're looking to find him, there he is! He just jumped into the river water to get baptized for the love of you and me.

Our baptism into Jesus means we hear the same voice he hears. The same message from heaven is aimed at us. Mark or Liz or Paul or Janet (June or Ted), or whatever your name may be, God speaks to you as he speaks to Jesus, and says the same thing: "You are my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased."

You or I may think that to be an outrageous, unacceptable statement when directed to ourselves. After all, who are we to be children of God, children with whom God is pleased? But who asked our opinion? It's God who says this about Jesus and about us. Who are we to disagree?

I'd like you to do me a favour. No, no, do yourself a favour. Write that message from heaven on your heart. Write it on your hand as though it were crib notes for a test. Write it on a piece of paper and slip it in your wallet or stick it in your bathroom mirror. Do whatever you have to do to remember this and not forget that God says to you personally: "You are my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased." It's profound, it's heart-warming, it's unbelievably true!

Better yet, listen for that message. You don't have to be up to your waist in river water to hear this message come at you like a bolt from heaven. Listen carefully to the cracks and crevices in your life, and by God's grace, that message will sound forth. It may come as a whisper, it may come as a shout, and some days it may even seem like a mumble, but that message will be there, because it is a message to you that God does not withdraw or eradicate. What God does is keep saying it, whether or not you choose to listen: "You are my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased."

Some people say that Christianity's a matter of believing. There's truth in that. Some people say that Christianity's a matter of doing. There's truth in that. But I want to add another piece, without which all the rest is sure to fall apart. Christianity's also a matter of listening. Listening for the message from heaven. Listening for what Jesus heard at his baptism. Listening for the same message spoken to us day by day in the cracks and crevices of our lives: "You are my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased." Now this listening, is no easy thing. Why? Because there are other voices echoing in the world and echoing in our hearts, voices that don't say the same thing about us, that deny in

one way or another our identity as God's children. These are the voices of temptation. They may sound smooth, they may seem respectable, and sometimes nobody argues with them, but they are a lie. Discipleship is more than a matter of belief and practice; it is knowing how to listen, and to determine what voices are true.

This learning to listen needs to be taught to our children, our grandchildren, and ourselves and even beyond that – to all we meet. We can even help people to listen who aren't even here yet. The name for this is evangelism. To share our faith with others means helping them listen in and hear the message God speaks to them constantly: "You are my beloved child; with you I am well pleased."

Today, I have spoken to you in the name of the God manifest at Christ's Baptism: the Spirit, who descends from heaven as an empowering gift; and the Son, who goes down in the water and rises again; and the Father, who accepts Christ as his child, and us in Christ. To this Trinity of wondrous love be praise and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

### I, THE LORD OF SEA AND SKY

#### 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.*

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?

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?

**T**HE peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the Knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord: and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be amongst you and remain with you always. **Amen.**



Welcome to issue number 42.

### HYMN - GOD IS GOOD ALL THE TIME

#### Chorus

**GOD IS GOOD** all the time  
*He put a song of praise in this heart of mine  
God is good all the time  
Through the darkest night, His light will shine  
God is good, God is good all the time*

If you're walking through the valley  
And there are shadows all around  
Do not fear, He will guide you  
He will keep you safe and sound  
He has promised to never leave you  
Nor forsake you, and His word is true

#### Chorus

We were sinners and so unworthy  
Still for us He chose to die  
Filled us with His Holy Spirit  
Now we can stand and testify  
That His love is everlasting  
And His mercies, they will never end

#### Chorus

Though I may not understand  
All the plans you have for me  
My life is in your hands  
And through the eyes of faith  
I can clearly see

#### Chorus + ending:

*God is good, God is good  
God is good, He's so good  
God is good, He's so good  
All the time.*

### LET US PRAY

**God, You are so good to us and we thank You that we are able to sing Your praises today. Lord, Your word, 'You are my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased', is the focus of our worship today. So as we call upon You, Lord, to see us through all the battles and troubles of life, help us to clearly hear You calling our name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

### HYMN - AS WITH GLADNESS

**AS WITH GLADNESS** men of old,  
Did the guiding star behold,  
As with joy they hailed its light,  
Leading onward, beaming bright;  
So, most gracious God, may we  
Evermore be led to Thee!

As with joyful steps they sped,  
Saviour, to Thy lowly bed;  
There to bend the knee before  
Him, whom heaven and earth adore.  
So may we with willing feet  
Ever seek the mercy seat.

As they offered gifts most rare  
At they cradle, rude and bare;  
So may we with holy joy,  
Pure, and free from sins alloy,  
All our costliest treasures bring,  
Christ, to Thee, our heavenly King.

In the heavenly country bright  
Need they no created light;  
Thou its light, its joy, its crown,  
Thou its sun which goes not down;  
There for ever may we sing  
Hallelujahs to our King.

### EVENING PRAYER

When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. *Ezekiel 18:27*

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us: but, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. *1 John 1:8,9*

**D**EARLY beloved brethren, the Scripture moveth us in sundry places to acknowledge and confess our manifold sins and wickedness; and that we should not dissemble nor cloke them before the face of Almighty God our heavenly Father; but confess them with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart; to the end that we may obtain forgiveness of the same, by his infinite goodness and mercy. And although we ought at all times humbly to acknowledge our sins before God; yet ought we most chiefly so to do, when we assemble and meet together to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at his hands, to set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his most holy Word, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul. Wherefore I pray and beseech you, as many as are here present, to accompany me with a pure heart and humble voice unto the throne of the heavenly grace, saying after me:

**A**Lmighty and most merciful Father, We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws, We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, And we have done those things which we ought not to have done, And there is no health in us: But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders; Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults, Restore thou them that are penitent, According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord: And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy Name. **Amen.**

**A**LMIGHTY God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live; He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel. Wherefore let us beseech him to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him which we do at this present, and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy; so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

**O**UR Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that 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*

O Lord, open thou our lips.  
*And our mouth shall shew forth thy praise.*

O God, make speed to save us.  
*O Lord, make haste to help us.*

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost;  
*As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be : world without end. Amen.*  
Praise ye the Lord.

*The Lord's Name be praised.*

#### BIBLE READING - MARK 1:4-11

<sup>4</sup>And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. <sup>6</sup>John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

<sup>7</sup>And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. <sup>8</sup>I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." <sup>9</sup>At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. <sup>11</sup>And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

**THIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD - THANKS BE TO GOD.**

#### NUNC DIMITTIS - Luke 2:29

**L**ORD, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace : according to thy word.  
For mine eyes have seen : thy salvation,  
Which thou hast prepared : before the face of all people;

To be a light to lighten the Gentiles : and to be the glory of thy people Israel.  
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost;  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. *Amen.*

#### THE APOSTLES' CREED

**I** BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth :  
**And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried, He descended into hell; The third day he rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Ghost; The holy Catholick Church; The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the life everlasting. Amen.**

The Lord be with you.

*And with thy spirit.*

Let us pray. - Lord, have mercy upon us.

*Christ, have mercy upon us.*

Lord, have mercy upon us.

O Lord, shew thy mercy upon us.

*And grant us thy salvation.*

O Lord, save the Queen.

*And mercifully hear us when we call upon Thee.*

Endue thy Ministers with righteousness.

*And make thy chosen people joyful.*

O Lord, save thy people.

*And bless thine inheritance.*

Give us peace in our time, O Lord.

*Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God.*

O God, make clean our hearts within us.

*And take not thy Holy Spirit from us.*

#### COLLECT - 1st SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**O**LORD, we beseech Thee mercifully to receive the prayers of Thy people which call upon Thee; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

**O**GOD, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed; Give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give; that both our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments, and also that by Thee we being defended from the fear of our enemies may pass our time in rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. *Amen.*

**L**IGHTEN our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

#### HYMN - ALL HEAVEN DECLARES

##### ALL HEAVEN DECLARES

The glory of the risen Lord.  
Who can compare  
With the beauty of the Lord?  
Forever He will be  
The Lamb upon the throne.  
I gladly bow the knee  
And worship Him alone.

I will proclaim  
The glory of the risen Lord,  
Who once was slain  
To reconcile man to God.  
Forever You will be  
The Lamb upon the throne.  
I gladly bow the knee  
And worship You alone.

(Repeat verse 1)

**O**LORD our heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of kings, Lord of lords, the only Ruler of princes, who dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth: Most heartily we beseech Thee with thy favour to behold our most gracious Sovereign Lady, Queen ELIZABETH; and all the Royal Family: Endue them with thy Holy Spirit; enrich them with thy heavenly grace; prosper them with all happiness; and bring them to thine everlasting kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

**A**LMIGHTY and everlasting God, who alone workest great marvels: Send down upon our Bishops and Clergy, and all Congregations committed to their charge, the healthful Spirit of thy grace; and that they may truly please Thee, pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing. Grant this, O Lord, for the honour of our Advocate and Mediator, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

**A**LMIGHTY God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto Thee; and dost promise that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name thou wilt grant their requests: Fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. *Amen.*

**THE grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.**

#### HYMN - FAITHFUL ONE

**FAITHFUL ONE**, so unchanging,  
Ageless One, You're my Rock of peace.  
Lord of all, I depend on You,  
I call out to You again and again.  
I call out to You again and again.  
You are my rock in times of trouble.  
You lift me up when I fall down.  
All through the storm Your love is the anchor,  
My hope is in You alone.

(REPEAT)

#### JUST A BRIEF WORD - Bishop Paul Listening to the Right Voice - Mark 1:4-11

Are you keeping up with all the changing regulations about what you can and cannot do during this pandemic? We hear regularly from the Prime Minister, Ministers and advisers and most of the time all it achieves is to heighten our anxiety. Today I would like us to consider just who it is we listen to.

Each of the four gospels starts off the story of Jesus in a different way. Luke and Matthew offer familiar accounts, but each from its own perspective. Luke tells us about the annunciation to Mary, the birth at Bethlehem, the visit by the shepherds. Matthew tells us about Joseph's dream, the gifts of the Magi, the flight into Egypt.

John's perspective is different from both of these. His vision exceeds the boundaries of space and time as he announces that before anything was made, God's Word already was. Then he brings us down to earth again as he makes the great proclamation: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

But how does the remaining gospel, Mark, get under way? We hear nothing about the birth of Jesus or his early years. There are no assertions about the Word becoming flesh. Mark chooses to start with the baptism of Jesus at the hands of John. Jesus walks on to the stage of Mark's Gospel a grown man.

For Mark what's essential, what's the Gospel in a single phrase, is the message Jesus hears once he goes down under the river water and jumps up out of the water again. Do you remember those words? The heavens are torn apart, like sheets being ripped up for rags, a dove descends on him, and a voice fills his ears and all the depths of his soul: "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). If you are looking for hope in this confusing world we live in, then remember these words, dwell upon them. For in a sentence, they contain the entire good news of the Gospel. "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

God the Father says this about Jesus, and he never repents of saying so. Through all the days of ministry and nights of prayer in which Jesus engages, through his betrayal, desertion, humiliation, torture, and death the Father never takes back these words. They remain unchanging and unchangeable: "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." These words from heaven hold true as Jesus breathes his last on the cross and is buried in a tomb. These same words come true in a new and marvellous way when, alive again, he bursts forth out of the tomb. Even the great wide world is too small to hold him as he ascends to his Father, and there in glory they become true in a still more magnificent way: "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."