

Worship at Home – 12th January 2025 (1st Sunday in Ordinary Time)
A short act of worship for use in people's homes prepared by Mary Armstrong.

Introduction

Today we meet the adult Jesus for the first time, in Luke's Gospel as he comes forward for baptism. John's call to repentance made people wonder if he was the promised Messiah. However, John makes it clear that the Messiah is still to come and will baptize with the Holy Spirit. When Jesus is baptized, the Holy Spirit comes on him and God's voice names him as beloved – a true sign of who Jesus is.

This week we explore God's promise to be with us as we "pass through the waters". We reflect on meeting Jesus and each other in the water of life's challenges and remember significant times of "crossing over".

Call to worship

Jesus said,
'Come to me all you who are weary and burdened.'
So let us come to him now
with the weariness of our return to everyday life,
and the burdens of the year ahead.
Let us put them and ourselves
into his strong arms,
so that he can lower us into the waters
and raise us, cleansed and refreshed.

A prayer of approach

We come to worship, because we are called and chosen.
We come because of God's power and love and devotion to us.
We come to share the blessings of God and to receive more.
We come to stand with God and with each other.
We come humbly before the God who created the world,
who gave us Jesus, who poured out the Holy Spirit upon us.
Humbly we come and here we worship. **Amen**

Hymn – STF 248 – I heard the voice of Jesus say Horatius N Bonar (1808-1889)

- 1 I heard the voice of Jesus say:
'Come unto me and rest;
Lay down, O weary one, lay down
Your head upon my breast.'
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad,
I found in him a resting-place,
And he has made me glad.
- 2 I heard the voice of Jesus say:
'Behold, I freely give
The living water; thirsty one,
Stoop down and drink and live.'
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in him.
- 3 I heard the voice of Jesus say:
'I am this dark world's Light;
Look unto me, your morn shall rise,
And all your day be bright.'
I looked to Jesus, and I found
In him my star, my sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk,
Till travelling days are done.

A prayer of adoration

Epiphany God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we adore you.
Parent God, you care for us, tend to our wounds and swaddle us with love:
we adore you.

Lord Jesus Christ, you were born for us, lived for us,
suffered for us, died for us, raised for us:
we adore you.

Holy Spirit, you were poured out upon us at baptism and beyond,
poured out for our blessing and our faith:
we adore you.

Epiphany God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, **we adore you. Amen**

A prayer of confession and assurance of forgiveness

Almighty, Eternal God,
we have walked journeys we should not have walked;
done things we should not have done;
said words that should not have been spoken.
We have ignored the gifts of your Spirit,
seeking to quench it rather than be cleansed by it.
We have been as silent as a dark night when we should have
been like a crackling fire bringing comfort,

warmth and reassurance.

Almighty and Eternal God, forgive us, we pray,
and kindle your flame within us. **Amen**

God turns our darkness to light,
forgives our sins,
accepts our repentance
and sends us on our forgiven way,
walking with God's Spirit within us. **Amen**

Bible reading – Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22

John the Baptist Prepares the way

¹⁵ The people were waiting. They were expecting something. They were all wondering in their hearts if John might be the Messiah. ¹⁶ John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I am will come. I'm not good enough to untie the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His pitchfork is in his hand to toss the straw away from his threshing floor. He will gather the wheat into his barn. But he will burn up the husks with fire that can't be put out."

The Baptism and Genealogy of Jesus

²¹ When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened. ²² The Holy Spirit came to rest on him in the form of a dove. A voice came from heaven. It said, "You are my Son, and I love you. I am very pleased with you."

Reflection on the reading

"You are my Son, the beloved; with you I am well pleased". These are the words God spoke as Jesus was baptised. God has called each of us by name. We belong to him.

Thinking about names, some of us like our names, and some of us, perhaps, don't. But they are ours and they belong to us. When a child is adopted, sometimes it is the only thing they bring with them. No clothes, no toys, nothing but their name; it is all they've got, and it is therefore very important to them. Sometimes our names may be said with care, delight and love. Sometimes they may be said with sadness, disappointment, even anger. Some of us will be used to using shortened forms of our names; when we were children, we knew we were in trouble if our full names were used!

We can perhaps imagine the warmth and sincerity of God's voice, the voice from heaven, when Jesus came up out of the water and received the Holy Spirit. 'This is my Son, my beloved son, and with him I am well pleased'. Can we imagine God saying the same of us? Close your eyes for a moment, and listen to the words again, beginning with your name: '...you are my beloved child and with you I am well pleased'. Know the warmth and the love of God's voice. What is it like? A strong and forceful voice or one that is gentle and calm?

There's no right or wrong answer to that, by the way. But here is a truth: that we, each and every one of us, are God's beloved, and God wants us to know and receive that love. Sometimes we may not feel loved, or even worthy of being loved. Sometimes we may feel quite the opposite. But the message of Scripture, Jesus' message, is that God wants us to know that no matter what we have done, no matter what our circumstances, no matter what we currently think: we are God's children, we are forgiven and loved, and all we have to do is reach out and receive that love.

Hymn – STF 545 – Be thou my vision Mary E Byrne (1880-1931), Eleanor H Hull (1860-1935)

- 1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.
- 2 Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;
be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.
- 3 Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.
- 4 Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise:
be thou mine inheritance now and always;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart:
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.
- 5 High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
great heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Prayers for the world, others and ourselves

Loving Lord of earth and heaven,
we thank you for the love which you have shown us through your wonderful creation.
We pray for those who work to combat climate change;
for scientists researching new ways to meet our energy needs;
for politicians to respond to the situation and to keep the pledges they have made;
for us that we may seek ways to live that help preserve the wonderful world that you have made'
As we celebrate your love for us,
May we love you in return.

Loving God of continents and countries,
we thank you for the love you have shown us which gives us a sense of who we are.
We pray for those who live in fear of war and civil strife;
for those who are threatened by oppression and violence;
for those who are driven to seek refuge and asylum in other nations or states;
for us that we may value our common humanity and share your world with others.
As we celebrate your love for us,
May we love you in return.

Loving God of wholeness and health,
we thank you for your love shown to us through the care of doctors and all healthcare workers.
for those who are engaged in food banks and work with refugees and asylum seekers;
for those who provide space and refreshment for people to gather in safety and comfort and find companionship.

We pray for hospitals having to declare critical incidents;
for those suffering with long term illness
For us that we may, through the way we live, keep ourselves and others safe.
As we celebrate your love for us,
May we love you in return.

Loving God of friends and family,
we thank you for those who enrich our lives by their kindness and love.
We pray for those who are separated from family and friends
for those whose homes are places of neglect or abuse;
for those who feel isolated and alone;
for us that we, knowing how much we are loved, may make time to share a friendly word with
others. As we celebrate your love for us,
May we love you in return.

We rejoice that we are loved and pray that refreshed by that love we may seek ways to share your
empowering love with those who do not know that they are loved. In Jesus' name. **Amen**

You may now wish to say The Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Hymn – STF 531 – What a friend we have in Jesus Joseph Medlicott Scriven (1819-1886)

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| 1 | What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
what a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer! | 2 | Have we trials and temptations,
is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged:
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness:
take it to the Lord in prayer. |
| | | 3 | Are we weak and heavy-laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge—
take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do your friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
in his arms he'll take and shield you,
you will find a solace there. |

Blessing

Holy Spirit, go with us into our daily lives this week.
Renew us with your power and your presence.
Father God, help us to know your love,
and that we are your beloved sons and daughters.
Lord Jesus Christ, help us to learn from you,
and to follow your example,
that we may share belovedness
with everyone we meet. **Amen**

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