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Service for the 1st Sunday after Epiphany, 10th January 2021

A warm welcome to all who share in worship with us today.

CALL TO WORSHIP: Psalm 95

95 Come, let us praise the LORD!
Let us sing for joy to God, who protects us!

⁶ Come, let us bow down and worship him;
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

⁷ He is our God;
we are the people he cares for,
the flock for which he provides.

HYMN: Brightest and best

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid;
star of the east, the horizon adorning,
guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

3 Say, shall we yield him, in costly devotion,
odours of Edom, and offerings divine,
gems of the mountain, and pearls of the ocean,
myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?

2 Cold on his cradle the dew-drops are shining;
low lies his head with the beasts of the stall;
angels adore him in slumber reclining,
Maker and Monarch and Saviour of all.

4 Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
vainly with gifts would his favour secure:
richer by far is the heart's adoration,
dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

5 Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid;
star of the east, the horizon adorning,
guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Reginald Heber

PRAYERS of thanksgiving & confession

Let us pray

Loving God, You have announced to us a new thing: a time of marvels and an age of praise. We wonder at the love that has been part of Your creative purpose for us since before the world began.

We praise You, loving God.

Loving God, You have revealed to us a new thing: a child of hope, a child of joy. We celebrate with awe the gentleness of Your dealings with us, for You are tender and humble, vulnerable and wise.

We praise You, loving God.

Loving God, You have called us as witnesses to Your new thing, to pray in trust and sing our faith. So we declare the holiness and justice with which You guide us and lead us into freedom and praise.

We praise You, loving God.

Forgiving God, You have entrusted us with such Good News, but so often we take it for granted. It has become ordinary to us and we have forgotten how amazing it is. We confess that we have allowed ourselves to become discouraged from sharing the Gospel. We have given up in times of difficulty. Forgive us for our lack of joy and sparkle. Help us to hear it again with open ears and to express our faith through our lives.

Loving God, have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and restore us to newness of life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Genesis 1: 1-5

1 In the beginning, when God created the universe, ² the earth was formless and desolate. The raging ocean that covered everything was engulfed in total darkness, and the Spirit of God was moving over the water. ³ Then God commanded, "Let there be light"—and light appeared. ⁴ God was pleased with what he saw. Then he separated the light from the darkness, ⁵ and he named the light "Day" and the darkness "Night." Evening passed and morning came—that was the first day.

St Mark 1: 1-11

1 This is the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ² It began as the prophet Isaiah had written:

"God said, 'I will send my messenger ahead of you to open the way for you.'

³ Someone is shouting in the desert,
'Get the road ready for the Lord;
make a straight path for him to travel!'"

⁴ So John appeared in the desert, baptizing and preaching. "Turn away from your sins and be baptized," he told the people, "and God will forgive your sins." ⁵ Many people from the province of Judea and the city of Jerusalem went out to hear John. They confessed their sins, and he baptized them in the Jordan River.

⁶ John wore clothes made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He announced to the people, "The man who will come after me is much greater than I am. I am not good enough even to bend down and untie his sandals. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹ Not long afterward Jesus came from Nazareth in the province of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ As soon as Jesus came up out of the water, he saw heaven opening and the Spirit coming down on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my own dear Son. I am pleased with you."

Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION: *Mrs Nancy McOnie*

Last Wednesday, 6th January, we celebrated the Epiphany, a Feast Day we may not always notice unless it falls on a Sunday.

We know that it is about the coming of the Wise Men to the manger and, hopefully, we remember to take down the Christmas decorations the previous night – Twelfth Night. However, we sometimes forget the significance of this event, which is that the story of the Wise Men represents the light of Christ being revealed to the Gentiles: Christ came to be the Light of the World.

Today's reading from Mark's Gospel reminds us of the baptism of Christ as He prepared to begin His ministry. We may wonder why Jesus needed to be baptised, but it was obviously important to Him and also reveals some messages for all of us. Let us consider three of these today:

- It establishes who Jesus is: the Son of God.
- It marks the first stage of His acceptance of God's purpose and His commitment to that plan.
- It is our first introduction to the Trinity, long before the church sought to explain this mystery.

His Identity

Jesus had His naming ceremony as a baby when He was taken to the temple by Mary and Joseph. He was recognised by Simeon as the "Light to lighten the Gentiles". At His baptism, Jesus stepped out on to the public stage for the first time and gave Himself to the call of the Father.

John the Baptist seemed unwilling at first to baptise Him, but he agreed to do what Jesus obviously wanted him to perform: something that marked this new beginning in His life. Jane Williams wrote in her commentary “Those watching see an ordinary man go down into the water to receive baptism, as many others have before; but as Jesus comes out of the darkness of the river into the light, we see the One whom God loves and through whom He shares His love with us.”

Our reading from Mark’s Gospel reminds us that “A voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with You I am well pleased.’ ”

There could not be a clearer indication of the identity of Jesus than we hear in those words ‘You are my Son’. Jesus knew that He was the Messiah.

Like Jesus, most of us will have had our naming ceremonies as infants rather than in adult baptism. We are received into the family of the church and mark the first stage of our Christian journey. When we are older, we confirm our commitment to follow Jesus through membership of the church, when we renew our vows of baptism.

His Ministry

For Jesus, this baptism marked the beginning of His ministry: a ministry which only lasted three short years, but which was a time of preaching, telling the Good News of God’s love for us, healing and caring for people and eventually giving His life for us. He willingly accepted that He was part of God’s purpose for the redemption of the world. Jesus made a commitment we would find impossible to make, although many Christians have suffered for their faith.

We are also called to the service of God and to commit our lives to Him. We follow where He leads us and make our own spiritual journeys, the journey from darkness to light. For Jesus, that journey led to death on the Cross; but also to resurrection and the promise to all of us that we have a final resting place with God.

The Trinity

Finally, this story is our first introduction to the Trinity. Long before the Church used the term ‘Trinity’, the Bible gives an illustration of the Trinity at work. We see the loving interaction between Father and Son in the word spoken from heaven ‘You are my Son, the Beloved’ and we see the work of the Holy Spirit descending like a dove on Him to empower and strengthen Jesus for the task ahead of Him. We could not find a relationship more special than that.

We also have the gift of the Holy Spirit, inspiring us, guiding us and giving us the power to follow and to serve: Father, Son and Holy Spirit all at work in our lives today. For this, we can say “Thanks be to God”.

Amen.

PRAYERS of intercession

At the words "Lord, as we dwell in You" please respond:

"may we know that You dwell in us".

Let us pray

Loving God, we give You thanks that You have called us and that we belong to You. We thank You for our own baptism and pray that we may always be aware of the influence of Your Holy Spirit in our lives.

We pray today for the young families in our own church, for all who have been baptised here. We give you thanks for all who have inspired us by their word or example. We pray for all ministers and preachers who lead our worship and care for our congregations.

Lord, as we dwell in You, **may we know that You dwell in us.**

Loving God, we bring to You the needs of our world. We pray for justice among the nations and remember all who suffer from captivity or tyranny. We remember that this pandemic is a global problem and pray for all who suffer at this time. Give strength and courage to those who care for them.

Lord, as we dwell in You, **may we know that You dwell in us.**

We pray for our own families and all whom we love, for members and friends of this congregation at Broadway URC. We commend to God's care all who are finding life difficult in the present situation. We pray for all who, having been baptised, have kept the faith. We pray especially for our loved ones departed from us. May they rejoice in the greater awareness of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and may we be found worthy to share with them the joys of that eternal kingdom.

We bring these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

HYMN: Jesus, we thus obey

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 Jesus, we thus obey
thy last and kindest word;
here, in thine own appointed way,
we come to meet thee, Lord.

2 Our hearts we open wide
to make the Saviour room;
and lo! the Lamb, the Crucified,
the sinners' friend, is come!

3 His presence makes the feast;
now let our spirits feel
the glory not to be expressed,
the joy unspeakable.

4 Now let our souls be fed
with manna from above.
His banner over us is spread,
his everlasting love.

Charles Wesley

HOLY COMMUNION

If you are at home, please have your Communion elements of bread & wine (or juice) ready now.

As God's children, loved and forgiven, let us celebrate this joyful feast. People will come from east and west and north and south and sit at table in the Kingdom of God.

Let us hear the gracious words with which our Lord Jesus bids us come to Him, that you may draw near in full assurance of faith. Jesus said "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never be hungry and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty. Anyone who comes to Me, I will never turn away."

Let us hear the story of how this sacrament began. On the night on which Jesus was betrayed, He sat at supper with his disciples. While they were eating, He took a piece of bread, said a blessing, broke it and gave it to them with the words "This is My body, it is broken for you, do this to remember Me."

Later, he took a cup of wine saying "This cup is God's new covenant sealed with my blood. Drink from it all of you to remember Me."

So now, following Jesus' example and command, we take this bread and wine, the ordinary things of the world, which Christ will make special. As He said a prayer before sharing, let us do so too.

Let us pray

Loving God, we give You thanks that You loved the world so much that You gave Your only Son, so that everyone who has faith in Him may not die but have eternal life.

We thank You that You have prepared this table for us, offering not just bread and wine, but Your very self, that we may be filled, forgiven, healed and blessed.

We join with all your people in heaven and earth to sing your praise. Glory be to You, O Lord most high.

A prayer of consecration

Lord Jesus, present with us now, for all that You have done and all that You have promised, what have we to offer? Our hands are empty, our hearts are sometimes full of wrong things. We are not fit to gather up the crumbs from under Your table. But with You is mercy and the power to change us. So, as we do now what You did in an upstairs room, send down Your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine, that they may become symbols of Your body: healing, forgiving and making us whole; loving and caring in the world until Your kingdom comes.

Amen.

Jesus took bread, broke it and said "This is My body, it is broken for you. Do this to remember me". Let us also eat and remember.....

Later, He took the cup of wine and said "This is the new relationship with God made possible because of My death. Take this, all of you." Let us also drink and remember.....

Let us pray

We thank You, Father, that You have fed us in this sacrament, united us with Christ and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet prepared for all God's people. To You be glory and praise.

Amen.

HYMN: Lord, speak to me

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 Lord, speak to me, that I may speak
in living echoes of your tone;
as thou hast sought, so let me seek
thy erring children lost and lone.

2 O teach me, Lord, that I may teach
the precious things thou dost impart;
and wing my words, that they may reach
the hidden depths of many a heart.

3 O lead me, Lord, that I may lead
the wandering and the wavering feet;
O feed me, Lord, that I may feed
the hungering ones with manna sweet.

4 O fill me with thy fullness, Lord,
until my very heart o'erflow
in kindling thought and glowing word
thy love to tell, thy praise to show.

5 O use me, Lord, use even me,
just as thou wilt, and when and where;
until thy blessed face I see,
thy rest, thy joy, thy glory share.

Frances Havergal

BLESSING

Now may the Lord bless us and keep us. May the Lord make His face to shine upon us and be gracious to us. May the Lord lift up His countenance upon us and give us peace, today and through the coming year.

Amen.