

Christ Church New Southgate & Friern Barnet

3 October 2021

Welcome

Song: Holy, Holy

Prayer

Song: I cast my mind to Calvary

Reading: Mark 1.9-13 read by Elijah

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

¹²At once the Spirit made him go into the desert, ¹³where he stayed forty days, being tempted by Satan. Wild animals were there also, but angels came and helped him.

All age Quiz

Song: Our God is a great big God

Sermon: The Lord will make a way

In the beginning there was nothing, apart from the Spirit of the Lord brooding over the waters. The Spirit was hovering and moving over the waters of this earth. The Spirit was present in the very creation of the world. And in this state of nothing, God opened the heavens, opened the oceans, opened the garden of Eden, and made a way for us to walk in. In oppression, the spirit of God

raised up a leader – Moses to save his people. In the desert, the lord led his people by fire and cloud to walk in his way. Through the prophet Isaiah, the spirit spoke in power. He called to mind a servant, for whom the Lord would say: here is my servant, who I have chosen and with whom I am pleased. Isaiah calls on the Lord to tear the sky apart and come down to his people. The spirit has been present and active since before the world began, he has been speaking to and leading god's people ever since. What is the spirit saying today? God is opening up a way.

This past 18months has been like a wilderness to us all. Each of us will have struggled in different ways with lockdown, freedom and restrictions changing all the time. John the Baptist liked hanging out in the wilderness. In fact, lots of Gods prophets are found in the desert places, for in the wilderness we can hear the Spirit speak the loudest. Both Allen and Julian have wanted to be baptised for a while but have been unable to. They have been stuck in the wilderness, looking for a way to find these waters. And the Spirit has made a way for each of them to be here today. Praise God.

John calls out from the wilderness to anyone who is listening – repent and be baptised. And Jesus joins the queue. Jesus joins him in the outback, in the desert near the river Jordan. Jesus joined John at the Jordan just as he joined the whole earth, he walked where we walk, he talked where we talk, Jesus son of God lived among us and made his home here.

How do you open a present? Do you tear a small corner off and try and guess what's inside? Do you not tear it at all but squeeze in and shake it – to see if you can hear what's inside? Are you a patient person, gently pulling at the Sellotape to undo the wrapping? Or do you rip the paper off as fast as you can?

If God were to unwrap a present, he'd be good at tearing the paper. For here at Jesus' baptism, God tears open the heavens, he makes way by ripping open the sky and gives Jesus a gift. A gift right at the beginning of his ministry. A gift of a vision and his voice. The gift is the anointing of the Holy Spirit like a dove. This gift is for Jesus – he saw heaven opening. The Spirit is for Jesus to be fully at one with God's purposes. To be led by him, to know the authority and power of the Spirit. And a reminder of Jesus place in the world – God's son, who he is pleased with. It's a gift to encourage and equip for returning to wilderness and the challenge of walking to the cross.

Today a similar gift is given to Allen and Julian. In baptism they enter the water as one person, under the water they lay down their old life and as they rise again, they begin their new life in Christ. For the change that the spirit has already brought in their hearts is being seen in public this morning. God has opened up a way for them to come today, God has opened up their hearts and brought them to this water.

As Jesus dies on the cross, he puts to death all our sin, he makes a way for us to be part of God's family. For where evil and sin had been a barrier, Jesus opens the way for us. The Spirit calls us to follow him, and God welcomes us home. Through Jesus sacrifice, our sin is washed away. All of our failings and faults are forgiven, and so we are able to hear God call us: you are my child and I am pleased with you. Did you know that God has made a way for you? Did you know that the heavens are not closed to you but open wide? Just as the temple curtain was torn in two so is any barrier to each of us knowing that God loves us, blesses us with the Spirit, calls us his children and that he is pleased with us.

When we offer our lives just as Allen and Julian are today, the Lord makes a way to

bless us, to anoint us with his presence and remind us of his amazing love for us. If you're nervous, if you're anxious, if you're worried – God will make a way. God has opened the heavens, he has poured out his Spirit on all his people, and he welcomes all those who seek him to be part of his family. Jesus has walked your road already, lean on him today, and allow God to make a way for us to follow. Amen

Baptisms : Allen and Julian

Song: I have decided to follow Jesus;

Song: Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound

Intercession: led by Anthea Denham

Song: Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,

Blessing

**The Lord bless us
and keep us;
the Lord make his face
to shine upon us
and be gracious to us;
the Lord lift up
his countenance
upon us and give us peace.
Amen.**