

**Ripon & Lower Dales  
Worship at Home  
8<sup>th</sup> January 2032**

**Are you ready to start?**

Now that's a good question for the start of a new Year isn't it? Is there something new to happen this year that you need to prepare for? A new job, retirement, new birth, new home, new diagnosis to live with.

We have just finished our Christmas festivities, celebrating the birth of Jesus, but now leap forward in time - missing out his entire childhood, to arrive at the start of his Ministry. Today we join Jesus in the desert, coming to John to be baptised.

**Call to Worship**

Lord Jesus, thank you that you welcome us, no matter how we feel.

Draw us to together; draw us to you.

Help us to forget about ourselves for a while and to focus on you.

Fill us deeply with a desire to worship you, our living Lord. Amen.

**Hymn (StF) 330 Joy to the world**

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King;  
let every heart prepare him room,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

2 Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns!  
Let all their songs employ;  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3 He rules the world with truth and grace,  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders, wonders of his love.

Isaac Watts (1674–1748)

**Prayers of Adoration, Thanksgiving and Confession**

Almighty God, good Father to us all, creator and redeemer,

we worship you today.

Beloved Jesus, who came and lived among us, who showed us how to live,

we worship you today.

Holy Spirit, giver and sustainer of life, who guides us day by day in wisdom and truth,

we worship you today.

Father of all, who created the heavens and the earth, thank you that we are your beloved. Your Holy Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove.

May your Spirit meet us where we are today. May your Spirit breathe new life into us today. May you hold us with your righteous right hand.

Most merciful God, we thank you for your beloved Son Jesus, who moved into the neighbourhood and lived among us.

Thank you that we too are your beloved. Thank you that you sent your Son to die and rise again, so that we might have life and true freedom in you.

Thank you that we have been chosen by you, and that your love never ends, despite our failings and shortcomings.

Thank you that you chose to come to earth and be flesh among us.

We thank and praise you our heavenly king.

Lord Jesus, even though you did no wrong and did not need to be forgiven, you chose to be baptized; you chose to be like us.

We are sorry when we make wrong choices. We are sorry when we don't have the right attitude.

We are sorry when we choose to go our own way, rather than following your perfect example.

Lord Jesus, forgive us.

Help us to show humility and obedience as you did.

Help us to become more like you

Beloved Jesus, who loves us so much,  
thank you that, by your blood,  
we are forgiven and restored to new life in  
you. Amen.

### 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.

### Bible Readings

#### Isaiah 42: 1-9 The Servant of the LORD

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen one in whom I delight;  
I will put my Spirit on him,  
and he will bring justice to the nations.  
<sup>2</sup> He will not shout or cry out,  
or raise his voice in the streets.  
<sup>3</sup> A bruised reed he will not break,  
and a smouldering wick he will not snuff  
out.  
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;  
<sup>4</sup> he will not falter or be discouraged  
till he establishes justice on earth.  
In his teaching the islands will put their  
hope."  
<sup>5</sup> This is what God the LORD says—  
the Creator of the heavens, who stretches  
them out,  
who spreads out the earth with all that  
springs from it,  
who gives breath to its people,  
and life to those who walk on it:  
<sup>6</sup> "I, the LORD, have called you in  
righteousness;  
I will take hold of your hand.  
I will keep you and will make you

to be a covenant for the people  
and a light for the Gentiles,  
<sup>7</sup> to open eyes that are blind,  
to free captives from prison  
and to release from the dungeon those  
who sit in darkness.

<sup>8</sup> "I am the LORD; that is my name!  
I will not yield my glory to another  
or my praise to idols.  
<sup>9</sup> See, the former things have taken place,  
and new things I declare;  
before they spring into being  
I announce them to you.

#### Matthew 3: 13-17 The Baptism of Jesus

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to the  
Jordan to be baptized by John. <sup>14</sup> But John  
tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be  
baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

<sup>15</sup> Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper  
for us to do this to fulfill all  
righteousness." Then John consented.

<sup>16</sup> As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up  
out of the water. At that moment heaven was  
opened, and he saw the Spirit of  
God descending like a dove and alighting on  
him. <sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, "This is  
my Son, whom I love; with him I am well  
pleased."

#### Hymn 233 When Jesus came to Jordan

- 1 When Jesus came to Jordan  
to be baptised by John,  
he did not come for pardon,  
but as his Father's Son.  
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)

## Reflection

Jesus comes to the River Jordan and is baptized by John, who is reluctant because he thinks Jesus should baptize him.

The baptism of Jesus is a wonderful image of Jesus' submission. Jesus knew that to demonstrate his obedience he needed to go through John's water of repentance. As he came up out of the water, he heard the words that showed God's attitude towards him: 'my Son...with whom I am well pleased'.

The baptism of Jesus is one of the few events in his ministry recorded in all four Gospels. The picture of Jesus offering himself as the Messiah begins in the River Jordan, when he bows his head humbly to receive a baptism for the forgiveness of sins. This moment of his baptism indicates the beginning of his ministry, and yet it also reflects the tone of his whole life.

He chooses to walk the same path as those who came out into the desert to listen to John the Baptist, hoping to hear God's promises. He chooses to make this quiet yet definite beginning to his life of service.

John's question to Jesus is understandable: 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' Jesus' answer reflects the Isaiah 42 picture of bringing forth justice without extinguishing even a smouldering wick. 'Let it be so now' – this quiet, humble path is the beginning of the fulfilment of 'righteousness'. We often give this word a personal religious meaning, but 'righteousness' also means putting things right judicially, acting with an emphasis on fairness – the justice that God's Servant would bring.

The 'bringing forth' of justice in Isaiah 42: 1 and 4 is described as a quiet, faithful process rather than a violent conquering of injustice. The new things that 'spring forth' are described in a way that means to sprout up like a sapling that will become a tree. The power of this 'bringing forth' of justice is in its faithful accomplishment, the servant is so constant and gentle that he will not break a bruised reed.

Jesus coming to John at the River Jordan marks an important moment in the Gospels. This is where it all really starts (indeed, Mark's Gospel does start here), as we get a glimpse into the purposes of God and why Jesus came. And it's noticeable that Jesus doesn't start with 'all guns blazing'. Quite the reverse. The Son of God begins his ministry with an act of submission, one that John was clearly not expecting as his question shows.

Jesus, it would seem, needed to start his ministry with the right attitude: submission to God's will. Without this, the mission of salvation could not have been accomplished. Submission, these days, may be confused with being a doormat, letting others walk all over you. But this is the complete opposite of what Jesus was doing. Submission to God's will means knowing and doing what is good and right and true, even when others laugh at you, think you are mad; even oppose and intimidate you, perhaps physically. That requires great strength – of character, of mind, of purpose. Strength and determination. Submission to God's will is not 'gentle Jesus meek and mild'. Remember, this is the man who overturned the tables of the moneychangers!

Jesus came, we are told, 'to fulfil all righteousness' – to fulfil all justice, a justice that comes from the heart of God. Jesus is on the side of the weak, the helpless, those on the margins. Jesus is the servant as described in the words of the Isaiah passage. Fulfilling all justice and righteousness means doing things the way God wants them to be done.

Jesus' commitment to this, his submission, is enacted in the ritual of John's baptism. And God's response is clear. 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.' This short message must have spoken deep joy into Jesus' soul. He knew God was with him. He knew where he was going. His heart and mind were in the right place. He was ready to start his ministry now.

And our call is the same. We need the same attitude of humility and submission to the will of God, the same desire for justice that comes from the heart of God, and – through the power of the Spirit within us – the same strength and determination to see it through, as Jesus did.

Are you ready to start?

### **Hymn 707 Make me a channel of your peace**

1 Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love ;  
where there is injury, your pardon, Lord ;  
and where there's doubt, true faith in you :

*O Master, grant that I may never seek  
so much to be consoled as to console ;  
to be understood as to understand ;  
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

2 Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope ;  
where there is darkness, only light ;  
and where there's sadness, ever joy :

*Refrain*

3 Make me a channel of your peace.  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
in giving unto all that we receive,  
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Sebastian Temple (1928–1997)  
from the *Prayer of St Francis*

### **Prayers for others**

God of heaven and earth,  
we pray for those who have never been  
cherished or affirmed...

### **May they hear you calling their name.**

For those for whom the time has never been  
right to follow their dreams...

### **May they hear you calling their name.**

For those burdened with responsibilities, with  
debts, with illness.

### **May they hear you calling their name.**

For those who have had all thoughts of  
heaven crushed by the cruelties of earth...

### **May they hear you calling their name.**

For those waiting for confirmation that the  
time is right and that they have your  
blessing...

### **May they hear you calling their name.**

**Amen.**

### **Hymn 346 Christ is the world's light**

1 Christ is the world's light, Christ and none other ;

born in our darkness, he became our brother.  
If we have seen him, we have seen the Father :  
glory to God on high.

2 Christ is the world's Peace, Christ and none other ;  
no one can serve him and despise another ;  
who else unites us, one in God the Father ?  
Glory to God on high.

3 Christ is the world's Life, Christ and none other ;  
sold once for silver, murdered here, our brother —  
he, who redeems us, reigns with God the Father :  
glory to God on high.

4 Give God the glory, God and none other ;  
give God the glory, Spirit, Son, and Father ;  
give God the glory, God with us, my brother :  
glory to God on high.

Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000)

As Jesus came to the river to do what God  
wanted,

the Spirit came upon him to show that God  
loved him.

Send us out this week, as your beloved  
children,

filled with the right attitude

to share your love with all the world. Amen.

**Kathy Lowrie**