

Reflection on Luke 3 v 15-17 & 21-22  
9 January 2022

When I looked up the lectionary for today and saw it was about Jesus's baptism I was pleased and thought, oh good, I can talk about babies - how much joy and pleasure they bring - how it's a while since i held a baby and that Jin Sook right now is enjoying being with her 7 month old grandson.

But no..... Of course Jesus was baptised with he was a man of 30.

We know nothing of His life between the ages of 13 & 30. Nothing is recorded.

The suddenly he appears on the east bank of the Jordan River, north of the Dead Sea. Al-Maghtas is the site, also referred to as Bethany and is now away from the river as its course has changed over the centuries,

This sacred place is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, in Jordan, and you buy a ticket to see it.

John the Baptist was 6 months older than his cousin Jesus, his mother Elizabeth was Mary's aunt.

John sounds like an interesting character, he was an itinerant preacher, he lived rough, dressing in camel hair clothing and ate locusts and honey. He had long hair, never drunk wine and shunned temples and towns. People, however, were drawn to him, he constantly preached that he was nothing, that the coming Messiah was everything. He preached repentance, the Kingdom of God was at hand and prepared the way for Jesus.

Apart from Jesus, John the Baptist is arguably the most theologically significant figure in the gospels. His birth was marked by angelic proclamation. His was the voice crying in the wilderness preparing the way for the coming Messiah. A transitional figure forming a link between Old and New Testaments.

The baptism is recorded in all four Gospels - Matthew 3 16-17

Mark 1 9-13

John 1 29-34

As well as the reading from Luke we have heard.

Here is a question - Why was Jesus baptised at the age of 30?

Answer - In Biblical times the age of 30 was the age of adoption into maturity and responsibility. (They didn't have 21sts in those days)

Jesus was baptised so He could become like one of us. He came in humility and submission to God's Grace. He set an example for us to follow and an opportunity to show his authority as God confirmed this was His Son.

The relationship between Father and Son is tenderly shown in the word "Son of God" "The heavens opened and a voice spoke - you are my own dear Son and I am pleased with you".

This confirmed to Jesus He was indeed the Son of God and this affirmation would have given Him the confidence and courage He needed to begin His challenging ministry.

Nowadays we seem to have so many obstacles that interfere with the Lord coming and remaining in our lives. Our lives are full of clutter and we allow so much to interfere with our relationship, worship and service to God.

So, - maybe as this new year begins, it is time to think about these obstacles or challenges?

Does anything prevent you from pursuing a deeper devotion for God, starting from now?

I am drawn to these words by Howard Booth

"God is not a good habit  
a useful Sunday exercise  
one interest among others  
a fascinating hobby  
God is life itself  
He is someone  
not to be analysed  
examined, proved  
But to be met  
And when that happens  
Life unfolds  
meanings matter  
Love is deeper  
Be still. Relax. Unwind.  
Open those inner doors."

What does this mean? A good habit, a useful Sunday exercise, one interest, a fascinating hobby?

For me Church attendance has always been part of my life so maybe it's a habit? But surely not a bad habit? Something to think about.

We all may have to accept that our services at both tranquil and calm Matawhero and in this glorious building may soon come to an end due to our dwindling resources.

But let's go back to Booth's words "God is life itself"

If we give ourselves over to God as Jesus did - life will unfold, meanings will matter and love will become deeper. Where this occurs is irrelevant.

Our lives are enriched by the knowledge that God is ours.

I would like to finish with words from the wonderfully insightful Joy Cowley.

"I think I need some practice,  
still times to sit with silence  
and feel comfortable in it  
so that I recognise the voice when it comes.  
And who knows? Maybe one day i'll discover  
that the best part of prayer  
is to let God do most of the talking"

Amen

References: Joy Cowley Aotearoa Psalms #30  
Approaches to Prayer 1991 ed Henry Morgan