

The JESUS we never knew x43. Sunday 22 October_2017.

3 Readers: Matthew 3: 13 – 17; Mark 1: 9-11; Luke 3: 21-22.

Jesus special relationship with the father and the Spirit. AIM for this year and this theme: for each of us individually and together to become better friends with JESUS. That is the real Jesus – not the Jesus of sentiment or others invention. Aim to know both the historical Jesus and to know Jesus experientially now. To do this we need to be able to spend time with him relating and especially reading the Gospels. (We will be thinking about the metaphor of relating through joining the dance. *Trinitarian baptismal dance: perichoresis – rotation and travelling forwards. Description: eternal, interpenetrating circulation – a circle dance.*) **The word “Trinity” is not used in the Bible but the descriptions and naming of the God who is 3 but united as ONE is very real.** It was *Tertullian (150 – 240)* who coined the term – tri-unity to give us insights into the life of God.

(Facebook) - 10.30 am worship (on 22nd Oct). Teaching: Jesus' special relationship with the Father and the Spirit. Jesus' baptism was a Trinitarian Dance. We too are called to be baptized into the Trinity - in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We will have sung worship and prayers for Zimbabwe.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IzA593uNpg> Let your living water flow over my soul. Refrain: Jesus x3; Father x3; Spirit x3.

Jesus was baptized by his cousin John in the River Jordon. This event marked the beginning of his ministry in the public arena and was a significant event in the Gospel's telling of his life. The **Jordon River** was of great importance in the story of the people of God. John the Gospel writer makes an important statement about this event when he uses John the Baptist's words to describe it: ***John's Gospel 1: 29 – 34***. As we have heard **all 3 synoptic Gospels voices** of Matthew, Mark and Luke describe the event and the Oneness of the Father, the Spirit and Jesus in this watery event. It is because of the Baptism of Jesus that **Christian Churches teach** that everyone seeking to repent and follow Jesus should be baptised.

The River Jordon was John's choice to practise his baptism and those wanting to repent and be baptised had to travel out of the city (*John 1: 28 Near the Town of Bethany (also called Bethabara) on the East side of Jordon*) to meet John and request that he baptise them. The Jordon River has great significance for Jews and Christians: this is the site where the Israelites cross into the promised land.

We read that crowds of people not ones and twos went out to be baptised by John. But the coming of Jesus was clearly of a different type to those others who came. John is hesitant to baptise Jesus declaring that Jesus should baptise him. His seniority/ superiority is obvious to John. But Jesus insists that he must allow it. Although Jesus is known not to be a sinner in need of forgiveness as all other humans are he comes to give legitimacy to John's baptism and John declares: *This is the one...he is the Son of*

God, there is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1). By choice – Jesus is numbered with the transgressors, Isaiah 53: 11, 12 in his baptism and death and identifies with us.

John the Baptist points Jesus out as different – and extra-ordinary. It is at his baptism that Jesus is marked out as the King, the anointed one of God and God's Servant. (*Psalms 2:7 and Isaiah 42 and 53*). The words describing the event are few but what happens is of the greatest importance and very beautiful. **The life of God is glimpsed, and it is a community – a holy community of three** who are named as Father, Jesus, and Spirit and each takes part in the baptism in the Jordan. **The experience of his baptism and the engagement with Father God and God the Spirit must have been of such importance in Jesus' memory and relishing** and especially at times of great testing and conflict – like the wilderness testings, his Passion and especially Gethsemane and even on the Cross.

Matthew's Gospel focuses *"on the personal experience of Jesus, so that it might suggest a purely private baptism"*. (*RT France*). In this event most importantly the voice of the Father is heard speaking directly to Jesus and the Spirit of God descends in a bodily form of a dove and remains on Jesus. As Jesus is plunged into the River Jordan he is plunged into all the history of Israel and that River and he symbolically continues his journey from the glorious presence of God, through the waters and into the earthly reality of coming to die for the sin of the world and rise triumphant. He exits not to lie on the river bank in repose but to be taken by the Spirit into the wilderness,

But while the baptism lasts it is a glorious coming together for John and the crowd to witness – **Jesus the Son and the Father and the Spirit – come together and join ... Jesus fully and perfectly human and fully Divine dances with Father God and the Spirit of God**. A dance to remember – and Jesus many times will have remembered and pondered what happened and what he heard the Father say, *You are my beloved Son and I am well pleased with you*. Matthew is stressing that this is firstly a commissioning of Jesus rather than a public revelation. It is Luke in his Gospel who states that there were many others present (*Luke 3: 21*). The Spirit descends in bodily form of a dove and remains upon Jesus – this is redolent of Genesis 1: 2 where the Spirit is present in creative force. (Not a sign of peace)

Jesus did NOT become Son of God at his baptism – he did not change in his nature, but it was a pivotal experience and also pointed him out as the answer the OT expectation. He is always God the Son.

It is Mark in his Gospel who is strong on the OT link – and makes the point that this is centuries in the coming (Donald English) and not a spur of the moment thing. The heavens were torn apart – Jewish thinkers would have understood that this meant a revelation of the Divine). Jesus heard God the Father speak and Matthew makes it plain that others heard it too. **On this occasion the Spirit came visibly, and the voice was audible.**

Of interest to me is that Luke tells us that Jesus after his Baptism was PRAYING – he was communing with the father and the Spirit when the voice is heard. Maybe even still standing in the water – and the heavens open (we eavesdrop on the private life of Jesus with his Father and the Spirit).

Jesus tells us that as his friends he shares with us everything he has heard first hand from the Father and, so we too become one with the life of God. This is an amazing claim and a wonderful revelation. The Spirit's descent upon us is also private, spiritual and personal but also objective.

Here at Jesus' baptism we see the **Godhead's commitment to bring in the Kingdom.** Even in boyhood we see in the Temple incident that Jesus had a growing understanding of his calling and here at his baptism it is deepening and growing all the time. His Messianic consciousness is strong and the Father and the Spirit are one with him in this. The three do not dance around one another politely – they are an interpenetrating circle dance (metaphor) – the Trinity is a relational community.

The church is aware that this is controversial. But God is controversial – set to challenge our assumptions and cause us to debate what we know and experience. While Christians declare with the other monotheistic faiths of Judaism and Islam that GOD IS ONE – we also claim that we experience God as triune – three persons both separate and perfectly united.

This is a teaching/ doctrine unique to Christians.

How close is your experience of God to this?

How do you encounter God?

Christians say that it is in encountering Jesus as God that we enter into this relationship – with the Father, the Son and the Spirit. (Symbolically and truly Spiritually we enjoy and this in our experience and especially in the physical watery experience of Baptism into the triune God who is named Father, Son and Holy Spirit). In that sense we follow Jesus into the experience of baptism.