

The Baptism of Christ January 11th 2026 St James.

May these words I Preach be acceptable to you our lord and saviour Amen

I wonder how many of you here remember your first visit to the seaside or maybe even a river or a large pond of water?

My first visit to an expanse of water was the seaside, when I was 4 years old. I remember just staring at the vast sea of water in front of me How did I feel? I had seen a lake before, but this was so much bigger and went on forever, I was excited but apprehensive as well.

So I was a bit on the nervous side as I walked to the edge of the water and slowly allowed the water to roll over my feet before turning to rush back to the safety of dry ground ,where as my younger brother aged 2 just raced straight in and got knocked over by a small wave and with a quick response from my dad was pulled on to his feet again, with a mouthful of salty sea water .

I eventually got braver and was helped by my mother to jump the rippling waves. My brother never went near it again.

Now I don't remember my baptism except to say I was baptized here in this very church on 26th December 1954. So, I can't remember being anointed with the Holy water of baptism, but I do remember my first visit to the seaside.

Yet here we see Jesus who had walked along that seashore for quite some distant possibly 40 to 80 miles to the river Jordan, heading south near to the dead sea where John the Baptist was baptizing in a region known as Bethany beyond the Jordan .Jesus would of had to walk from Nazareth through this dessert .It would have been a challenging walk as it was arid and waterless to actually reach where Johns location was .

This must have been something Jesus seriously wanted to do. He didn't dress up for it, he didn't need to be cleansed from his sins as he was already sinless, so what was the urgency?

Jesus got himself baptised to identify himself as the Messiah; to model obedience for followers and to show his very public ministry and it also stood symbolically of his acceptance to take upon himself humanity's sins, the anticipation of the ultimate baptism of suffering on the cross. His father was well pleased that Jesus had made himself known and was fulfilling

Gods plan and it also identified him as the son of god, his only begotten beloved son. God then affirmed he was his son by sending down the holy spirit in the form of a dove and letting his voice be heard from above saying this is my son with whom I am well pleased.

Now I don't think a miraculous event as occurred at anyone else's baptism, so this does show that Jesus had come on a redemptive mission for all of humanity being sent by his father.

So how do we grow our faith in Jesus? is it like me as a child on discovering this sea that stretched endless before me ,a slow tentative step that slowly begins to grow on me to the point of jumping over small waves and building on it by learning to swim and although I can swim am still a swimmer that likes to feel the ground below with one foot only swimming in the depth I feel comfortable in ,but will swim in the sea, a lake or river and at the swimming baths.

My brother dived right in got a mouthful of sea water and that was enough for him, but slowly over the years gained his life savers badge but didn't really swim any more.

I think these are good examples of how faith can grow or sometimes the way people turn away from faith.

My faith has been with me from the start, I was always asking about Jesus but as a child I thought Jesus was what children called him and the word God was for the adults, and the holy spirit was what Jesus became once he had died. I wasn't too far off when I learnt about the trinity of father son and holy spirit three in one and one in three.

Has I got to know more my faith grew and grew, but even today there are still some things I find difficult to understand and even some that I am afraid of, still paddling along the waters edge afraid to dive in as I might not be able to touch the bottom. I feel safer if I am grounded in my faith but on the odd occasion I have gone a little deeper and found that its ok as I can still find something to rest my foot upon.

My brother dived straight in and learnt that salty sea water tastes not very nice ,yet slowly he learnt to swim, just like when he was learning about Jesus he read everything and could answer lots of questions about him, but I feel he didn't really digest it as he slowly turned from his faith, but just

remained on the edge there after, he stopped coming to church stopped praying and saying thank you only prayed when he was in trouble so he was still thinking about Jesus but just couldn't take the step to start paddling again .

So here we have Jesus very keen to be baptised, a public anointing which marked his formal launch of the mission he had been sent to achieve. yet as soon as he was baptised the devil led him straight into the wilderness and tempted him for 40 days and nights.

Maybe this is how our faith journey was ,we got baptised with our god parents making promises on our behalf ,but as we grew we were also tempted by all the circumstances that surrounded us as children whether to pinch those sweets we really liked when you hadn't got quite enough money for those ones ,as we grew it was being tempted by peer pressure to taste your first alcoholic drink, knowing it might meet with disapproval or worse make you sick then have to lie about what you done .

We all say its just part of growing up and learning lessons. But was it part of learning what's right for us or being tempted to follow another path altogether.?

Jesus's temptation lasted for 40 days the devil wouldn't let him rest and it really was a battle of wills, one in which Jesus overcame and triumphed evermore.

After Jesus had overcome the temptations, the devil left him and he started on his ministry, returned to Galilee with the power of the holy spirit to guide him.

Our temptations are more of our own fallen mistakes, making us look at the nature of the temptation and our response to them, examining why we felt tempted even though we knew it was wrong, our human faith is a journey of development and a reliance on god's grace to help us overcome the temptation, but knowing there is forgiveness should we confess and turn back to him should we give into the temptation.

Jesus temptation was more of a challenge by Satan ,which Jesus over came by quoting scripture and showing his obedience and reliance on God's word, which made Satan leave him and the angels came and attended to him .It also showed this was part of his spiritual preparation after his

baptism but before his public ministry started .It demonstrated his faith and commitment to God's will over personal desire or worldly power .

Also, by overcoming Satan Jesus established his authority and proved his righteousness, the very foundation of Christian belief.

Jesus when he entered the waters of the river Jordan was not to be cleansed but to cleanse the water by his purification of his flesh as he was the sinless one, so the water was sanctified to all those who came after him to be baptised. Jesus was the only one who came to repent for the whole of the human race no matter where we live in our world.

So, when you think about your own baptism or are thinking of getting baptised even knowing of a baby or child to be baptised, think of Jesus and his baptism and all that his baptism meant for all of us and the weight that his baptism carried.

It is a very joyous occasion when some one is baptised and what a celebration it is for us all on the baptism of Jesus our lord and saviour.

Amen .

