

Sunday series '**Advent & Christmas**' - study 7 Theme – '**Baptism**'

Read Luke 3: 15 – 22 (read also the preceding verses 7 – 14)

1. The context in which our passage opens (verse 15) is that John has been preaching about the injustices within the society of his day and the need for individual repentance, marked publicly by baptism. 'The people were waiting expectantly' for more teaching and clarification about the long-awaited Christ.

1a. What, if anything, does this have to say about the church's role today?

1b. What, if anything, does it have to say about preparation for baptism today?

1c. What in the role of 'Godparent' (in the UK) has changed over time? Do you need to be a Christian to be a Godparent today?

2. John makes clear that baptism by water alone is not sufficient (verse 16) 'I baptise with water but... He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit'. The church historically has felt uncomfortable talking about this but today it is back at the forefront.

2a. For most of us, baptised as infants, when do you think baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place? Is there a specific time?

2b. Does baptism of the Holy Spirit happen uninvited? Is there a process through which you must go in order to receive the Holy Spirit? What is your experience?

2c. What evidence can be observed that identifies the Holy Spirit living within a person?

3. John focuses on two purposes of the incarnate Jesus Christ, the giving of the Holy Spirit and of judgement – 'baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire' [not the tongues of fire in Acts 2].

3a. What do you consider to be other purposes that John has omitted?

Read Isaiah 43: 1 – 13

4. This is a hugely encouraging and reassuring passage. In relation to the baptisms we have been thinking about, what should we draw from this passage.

4a. What characteristics of God are highlighted here?

4b. What concerns, if any, should we have about committing to this God?

4c. Should we have any reservations about allowing the Holy Spirit to fill us completely?