

Sunday 11 January – Baptism of Christ

Talk by Wendy Borgartz

As it is café church at St. Luke's there is no sermon as such from there and the sermon from the Diocese is using alternative readings. The talk from St. Luke's for café church is shown below, but will not be available on audio after the service.

(Each person to be given a piece of a jigsaw. During the talk pictures will be shown on the screen with only part visible so people have to guess what the picture shows.)

When we think about baptism, our first thought might be of water and the new start it brings, washing off the old and bringing something new. But alongside that there are the words that God says to Jesus when he gets baptised himself in the River Jordan: 'You are my son, the beloved, with you I am well pleased.' An important part of baptism is about becoming part of God's family, about becoming part of the big picture and the amazing plans He has in store.

So that's where the jigsaw comes in! You might have been thinking that this is a strange image to bring to a baptism, but bear with me! I don't know if anyone here is any good at jigsaws? Who likes doing jigsaws? Who dislikes them? Does anyone have a rule that you have to hide the box when you start a puzzle because it's even more fun to do if you don't even know what the picture is until it starts to come together? I'm not sure what you think of that!

Look at the partially obscured pictures on the screen that Martin will show us. Can you guess what they show from only seeing part of the picture?

God had a big picture, an organized plan with everything in its right place, for Jesus. We know little about Jesus growing up, there is just the story in Luke of him fulfilling every parent's nightmare and getting left behind in Jerusalem when Mary and Joseph took him to the Passover. While Jesus was young, presumably his mind and capacity were not sufficient for God's planned purposes, he needed to grow up and to mature as a human being first.

But from the moment Jesus comes back up out of the waters of baptism, there is a complete reset and God's true plan for his only Son can begin in

earnest. Jesus is accepting the baton from John, his forerunner, and starting the next phase of the plan with Jesus stepping out onto the public stage and beginning his public ministry. At his baptism, Jesus is submitting himself to his Father's authority and gets the affirmation from his Father that he is doing what God has planned. Jesus may not know exactly what he is stepping into at this stage, he does not begin to talk about the path leading to the cross for a while in the Gospels, but he knows he is following the will of the Father and he is acting in solidarity with us all by going through the same rite of baptism as us.

God has a big picture - his Kingdom, where there is love and joy and peace and hope. We only see part of it now, but we pray in the Lord's prayer that His Kingdom will come on Earth, and we will eventually see the whole picture. When we are baptised and we become part of God's family, we become part of God's plan to bring the big picture of his Kingdom to earth. Only God knows what the full picture looks like, but when we are baptised, it's as if, like Jesus, we take up a piece and say to God, 'I want to be in your family and I want to be part of your big picture!' As part of God's family, like the pieces in a jigsaw, we are also never alone. We are doing this together. Like the jigsaw pieces we are joined to many other people, many of whom are very different to us. If you look at the pieces of our jigsaw, hardly any of them are the same, yet they are all an important part of the picture and none of the pieces can make the picture by themselves. By joining in our new family, we get many new brothers and sisters who will support us, love us and help us to find where we fit.

I'd like to ask you to take one of the jigsaw pieces and to think of what it might mean to be part of God's family and to be part of His big picture for the world. Maybe you would like God to show you how you can share His love and bring hope to others. Perhaps you would like to learn more about God's love for you. Perhaps you would like to say thank you for those who have been baptised already and have become part of God's family, taking up their own piece of the picture. Let's take a moment now to speak to God about his big picture and our part in it.

As soon as Jesus was baptised, 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 lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

