

Why baptism?

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[0:00] We've got a video to start the sermon with, so have a look at the screen.

On Sunday, July the 13th at 9.30 in the morning, hundreds of people from five different churches! And to celebrate the fact that Jesus is Saviour and Lord.

The invitation is from Love Church and from Coastline Vineyard and from Catch the Fire and from Bournemouth Community Church and my own, Lansdowne. This collective of churches has come together because once a month we meet as leaders for breakfast and prayer.

And so the concept grew of why don't we bring people together across our five churches and celebrate the reality, the truth, the relevance of faith in Jesus.

Arrive early, ready to start for 9.30 and then bring a packed lunch with refreshments. We hope it will be a great chance to deepen authentic connections between Christians here in Bournemouth.

[1:19] You can go to the website for more. An out-of-date notice that Jerome forgot to say. That's a wonderful thing.

That in Bournemouth in July, loads of people were baptized publicly, declaring their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's really exciting. And this morning, we're at our own baptism service. We're not five churches together. We're one little church here this morning. But we've got three people standing up and saying, I'm a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He has worked in me his wonderful grace. And I'm going to go in this pool to show that is a reality in my life. And I'm going to keep following him by his grace for the rest of my life.

What a wonderful thing. We praise the Lord this morning. It's good, good news. And there's even more good news.

[2:23] And it's in this passage. And the good news we find in this passage is a person. Do you see that in verse 1? At the beginning of the good news about Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God.

We've heard good news this morning in Hema and Gensea and Varghese's testimony. But we've even got even better news to share this morning.

And the good news is found in a person. It's found in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God. What a way to begin a book.

With this good news. As sometimes we say in churches, the word gospel. You may know that that word, literally, it means good news.

Or if we say good news, we're meaning gospel. Okay? Just to be clear. And it seems to me that people, maybe it's just people around my age sort of thing.

[3:31] But people often think new things are best. Like new piece of technology comes out and it must be better because it's new. Or a new song comes out and that must be better because it's new.

But actually, I'm going to say that this good news is the best news. It's wonderful news, but it's not new. It's ancient news.

That's what we see here in this passage is ancient news. Verse 2, as is written in Isaiah the prophet. Isaiah the prophet.

He was around like 700 years or so before Jesus. This is not new. This is ancient. And that is good. This is good ancient news. This is the best news we could have this morning. Far better than anything new that we might be told today. And what is this ancient news?

[4:33] What was revealed through Isaiah the prophet? It's this, verse 2 and 3. I will send my messenger ahead of you who will prepare the way. A

voice of one calling in the wilderness.

Prepare the way for the Lord. Make straight paths for him. Prepare the way. This week you may have seen in the news, how would you escape it really?

Donald Trump came to town. He made his second state visit. An historic thing for a president to have. A second state visit.

And it struck me that all the way through, everything was so well prepared. The way had been prepared for Donald Trump to come to our country.

The minutest detail was sorted out, highly coordinated. And that's because it's not every day the US president comes to town. And it's not every day a second state visit happens.

[5:37] Got to be prepared. And it's not every day that God comes. Not in the way that Jesus is going to come.

People had been waiting a long, long time for this. They were being prepared hundreds of years before for this historic moment. When God comes.

Jesus, the one who we're told here is the Messiah. The promised one. The promised anointed king of God's people is coming.

And he's the son of God. Fully God and fully human. You may hear and speak about the Trinity. Many of us know that word. We're familiar with it. We understand what it means. But just in case we don't, we need to be clear. It means that God is one God in three persons.

[6:49] Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One God, three persons. And they're one together. And Jesus is part of that.

He's the son. And he is coming. God is coming. A monumental visit. We need to be ready. We need to be prepared.

You may notice from the footnotes in your Bibles that actually verse 2 is not a quote from Isaiah. You may question, why is that just a brief answer for you? We could chat more about it later if you want to. In Mark's time, authors would often merge quotes together from different sources that are saying the same thing.

And from what I understand, they'd often attribute that to the most famous of those authors. And here he attributes it to Isaiah, the prophets.

[7:55] But certainly these words come from the prophets. And this one comes from Malachi. Some Bible versions may actually say, as is written by the prophets or in the prophets.

And I think it's worth us turning to that quote in Malachi. I was struck by how helpful it is. It's always helpful to turn back to Old Testament quotes when we see them in the New Testament.

And it helps us to understand a passage a bit better. So Malachi 3, Malachi is the book at the end of the Old Testament, just before we get into the New. So only a few pages back, really.

Malachi 3, verse 1. Here's the familiar words from Mark's Gospel. I will send my messenger who will prepare the way before me.

Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant who you desire will come, says the Lord. Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming?

[8:58] Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a laundress soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. He will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.

Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness. And the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord. As in days gone by. As in former years.

So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers, perjurers. Those who defraud laborers of their wages.

Who oppress the widows and fatherless. And deprive the foreigners among you of justice. But do you not fear me. Says the Lord Almighty. We read those extra verses.

Because the Lord is coming. And he's coming to put his people on trial. And so we need to be prepared for that.

[10:01] This is a really serious thing. The Lord is coming. And actually if we stand on trial before him. We stand guilty before him, don't we? If someone's on trial, they're guilty.

Or potentially guilty of something. Of crime. So it's good that here we find in Mark 1. That the Lord really is preparing the way for his coming.

And he's doing that in his messenger, John the Baptist. He says, be prepared. Be prepared for God's coming. What exactly is John's message?

Verse 4. And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness. Preaching a baptism of repentance. For the forgiveness of sins. He's saying that before God.

You are guilty of sin. You are guilty of doing wrong. And so. You need to have a wash. You need to be clean.

[11:06] Because actually before the Lord. You're dirty. Have a wash. Be prepared. Because God is coming.

And you are not clean before him. Before him who is the one. Who is completely holy. Completely set apart from us.

Without any sin. He's never done anything wrong. He's made his ways known to his people. He's given them laws and commands.

And ways to live in obedience to him. But none of us meet those standards. We're dirty. Sinful people before him. We need a wash. Water companies have been in the news over the last few years.

Haven't they? Because they're making some of our waters dirty. And people rightly stand up and complain about that. Because we don't want to swim in sewage.

[12:11] Do we? We don't want you dirtying our seas. It's not good for the fish life. And other marine life. It's not nice to have dirty water.

But on this day. As John the Baptist is calling people to be baptized. There's going to be some dirty water. I'm afraid. And there needs to be.

Because you need to be clean. Now the baptism pool this morning. We've worked hard to make it as clean as possible. This is pretty clean water. But once myself and Ruth.

Who are going to baptize. Genesee and Himmer and Varghese get into it. It will be dirty. And that's not just because. We might be a bit dirty on the outside. It's going to be polluted water.

Because as John says. You sin. And so I think. What we ought to do really. With the water.

[13:16] Is do something like this. So Phil. Could you just hold this jug at the front. I haven't asked you to do this at all. So there we go. Unprepared. I think this is what we should do. To this baptism water.

Okay. We should do that. And do you see. The water turns dirty. With just a drop. Of that. And in this water this morning.

Sinners are going in it. And it's going to be stained. With sin. That's what our sin does. We're dirty. Before the Lord. We stain things. Look at this world. It's stained by sin. Isn't it? We need to clean up.

And so. John the Baptist. As he says. Be baptized. He also says. Repent. Repent. His baptism.

[14:15] Is the baptism of repentance. And the forgiveness of sins. What does repent mean? It means. It means. Well. It means turning around. It means right now. You're walking this way.

In sin's way. And you need to take a turn around. To this way. To follow God. And his ways. As you do that. You confess your sins.

The Lord. And he forgives you. In his mercy. And to show that you're serious about that. To show that that's worked. In your life. Be baptized. And verse 5.

Look what happens. The whole Judean countryside. And all the people of Jerusalem. Went out to him. Confessing their sins. And they were baptized. In the river Jordan. So.

Baptism festivals. A bit like what was going on. In Bournemouth Beach. In July. Loads of people. Getting baptized. In the river. And I wonder if people complain.

[15:14] That river's polluted. Polluted. Polluted with sinner stains. Polluted with lies. Polluted with lust. Polluted with sinful anger.

Polluted with envy. And corruption. And greed. And stealing. And you name the sin. It's in there. It's dirty water.

Because we're sinners. And God is coming. And we need to be ready. We need to be clean. But is water enough? Have a look at verse 7.

And this was his message. After me comes one more powerful than I. The straps of whose sandals I'm not worthy to stoop down and untie. That's strange.

A John the Baptist has been sent by the Lord to prepare the way for the Lord. And he says I'm not even worthy to be like a servant before the Lord. And stoop down and untie his sandals.

[16:18] That's strange. And yet it's not because John realizes the human condition.

Just how sinful. Just how dirty we are before the Lord. That not even a wash in the river Jordan is enough.

Verse 8. I baptize you with water. But he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. The water's not really going to do anything.

But the one who is coming will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. He can change you. He can make you right in God's sight.

So we need this other baptism. We need to baptize. I've put HS. That's a copy and pasted from my notes. Holy Spirit. We need to baptize with the Holy Spirit.

[17:22] Because we're sinners, aren't we? However much we might clean ourselves on the outside. We're not going to be right before God. Other religions try it. They go through rituals and things to make themselves clean on the outside.

But it doesn't change their hearts. And maybe you're tearing that this morning. But nothing's changing. It won't clean my sinful heart.

God is so holy. And the Spirit, he is God. He is the Holy Spirit. How can he come anywhere near us?

How can we be baptized with the Spirit if he's so holy? Verse 9. At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the water.

This is Jesus, the one who verse 1 speaks of the beginning of the good news about Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God. He's come.

[18:40] He's arrived. He's with you. And so we need to pull out the stops. We need to do what we did with Donald Trump, put him up in Windsor Castle.

And maybe that's not even enough for the Son of God. And yet he goes in the River Jordan. He goes in the river polluted with sin.

He shouldn't be there. Some mistakes happen in the preparations, hasn't it? He shouldn't be there. That's not fit for God. And yet he is willing to do that.

He is willing to come into our place. God in human form, in like one of us, and going into the water polluted with sin.

He's willing to do that for us. Because we can't clean ourselves. But just in case you think Jesus has perhaps gone rogue here from God, on some rogue mission on his own, don't panic, verse 10.

[20:09] Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, what a moment. He saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

And a voice from heaven saying, You are my Son, whom I love. With you I am well pleased. Father, Son, and Spirit.

The Trinity, God, the three in one, is here together in this verse. In this extraordinary verse, as Jesus comes up out of the water.

They're together in this mission to come for sinful human beings. And through the work that the Lord Jesus will go on to do, sinners will be able to repent and confess their sins, confident that Jesus has paid for everyone.

and be baptized with his Spirit. Know his Spirit in their lives, working and changing them to make them more like the Lord Jesus.

[21:22] And that work of Jesus that he would go on to do, you know it well, you probably know what I'm going to say. He goes to the cross. He stoops down low to be baptized in polluted water.

And maybe you think that's just enough for God. Why would he even do that? And yet he goes further to death, even death on a cross. A criminal's death.

A humiliating death. A torturous death. Our death. The death that we should die.

The punishment we should go through for our sins. We deserve to be there on that cross and facing God's full wrath, full anger on our sin.

But Jesus died. He faced that for us so that we can be made clean. So that we can be made right with God.

[22:34] Water in the Bible is often a symbol of God's judgment. Perhaps most famously, think of Noah and the great flood.

Incidentally, recently, someone gave to our little Micah some Noah's Ark toy. And they said, what a cute, lovely little story it is. And we're like, well, actually it's not, is it?

I mean, it's amazing. A story of God's rescue and salvation and grace. It's amazing. But it's also a story of God's sobering judgment on the world.

And he uses water. And he uses water. And as Jesus is baptized in this passage, he literally goes under the water. And on the cross, he goes under the waters of God's judgment.

He faces God's judgment on us. And so what Jesus was doing in his baptism was symbolic of what he would do in the future, going under the judgment of God for us.

[23:43] But the symbol of baptism doesn't end there. It doesn't end with just someone being under the water.

Otherwise, we'd be at a drowning service this morning. And I don't think we want to be at one of those. Excitingly, in baptism, people come back up.

Because that points to Jesus' work too, doesn't it? He came back up from the dead. He rose again to new life. And just want to show you very briefly from Romans more of the significance of baptism and Jesus' work for us.

So firstly, Romans 6, verse 4. Romans 6, verse 4 and 5. I couldn't read more verses here, but time is short.

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead, through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

[24:58] That verse showing the significance of how we're united to Jesus in his death and resurrection. And that's what baptism is a picture of this morning.

That Himer and Varghese and Jensi are united to Christ in his death and resurrection.

That's already happened. And we get to see it visibly. They get to experience it visibly, tangibly today. And those who have new life with Him, as Mark 1 made clear, they need to be baptized as the Holy Spirit.

And as we're joined with Christ, we receive His Holy Spirit as we become new creations in Christ. And Romans 8 is a wonderful chapter. We could have a whole other sermon on this chapter today, but we're not. So just verses 14 to 17, just to see the wonderful new life in Christ.

[26:08] For those who are led by the Spirit are the children of God. The Spirit you receive does not make you slaves so that you live in fear again. The Spirit you receive brought about your adoption to sonship.

And by Him we cry, Abba, Father, we're His children. And the Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. It's wonderful that we have the Spirit within us saying that.

Now if we are children, then we are heirs. Heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ. Indeed, if we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.

The Spirit we've received, according to Paul, is the Spirit of adoption. He helps us to cry, Abba, Father, Father, You're my God. You're my Father. I'm your child. See, God hasn't just come to rescue us from our sins.

That's wonderful that He does, but He's come to bring us into a new family. We're united with a Son. And perhaps some of us struggle with our families, maybe struggle with our parents.

[27:19] Perhaps some of us struggle with our fathers. Struggle to know whether we really have our Father's affection and approval of us. But wonderfully, if we're in Christ, we have a far more wonderful Father than even the best of human fathers, who does so love us, so wonderfully, that as He said to Jesus, His Son, so He says to us this morning, for in Christ, You are my Son, You are my daughter.

With You I am well pleased. And He says that because of Christ's work for you. Him, this morning, as you're baptized, you are a precious child of God.

God says, I love you. You're my son, you're my daughter. With You I am well pleased. We rejoice in God's work in you in that way.

Amen. This morning is a celebration of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit's work in these lives.

And we trust that this work will continue on until He calls you home, or until Jesus returns. And just one final note. God has come.

[28:52] And God is coming again, we believe, from the Bible. And we need to be prepared for that coming. And if you're here this morning and you know that you're not yet a Christian, you've not yet repented, turned your life around to follow God, this morning the offer's there from the Lord Jesus, who has come for you.

Repent of your sin. Say sorry to God. And say, I want to follow you the rest of my life.

And if that happens with you this morning, perhaps it could be you here in the future, standing up and testifying to God's amazing grace.