

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church  
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,  
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY

8 January, The Baptism of Jesus

**HYMNS:** 16 152 791 279

**INTROIT:** Psalm 29

Give to the LORD, you heavenly beings, give to the LORD glory and strength!  
Give to the LORD the glory due to His name! Worship the LORD in holy splendour!

The voice of the LORD is over the waters. The God of glory causes it to thunder. The LORD is over many waters.

The voice of the LORD is powerful. The voice of the LORD is majestic.

The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars. The LORD shatters the cedars of Lebanon.

He makes Lebanon skip about like a calf. He makes Sirion skip about like a young wild ox.

The voice of the LORD flashes out with flames of fire.

The voice of the LORD makes the wilderness tremble. The LORD makes the Wilderness of Kadesh tremble.

The voice of the LORD causes the fallow deer to be in labour, and strips the forest bare. In His temple everyone is saying, "Glory!"

The LORD sat enthroned over the Deluge, and the LORD has for ever been sitting as King.

The LORD will give strength to His people. The LORD will bless His people with peace.

**COLLECT:** Father in heaven, at the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River You proclaimed Him Your beloved Son and anointed Him with the Holy Spirit. Make all who are baptised in His name faithful in their calling as Your children and inheritors with Him of everlasting life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**READINGS:**

Isaiah 42:1-9 "Here is... My chosen One in whom I delight."

Romans 6:1-11 "All of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death."

Matthew 3:13-17 John baptises Jesus in the Jordan.

*Welcome to all worshipping with us today!*

Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.

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***Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.***

### **Isaiah 42:1-9**

<sup>1</sup> “Here is My Servant, whom I support, My Chosen One, in whom I delight! I have put My Spirit on Him. He will bring righteousness to the nations. <sup>2</sup> He will not cry out. He will not raise His voice or make His voice heard in the street. <sup>3</sup> He will not break off a bruised reed or extinguish a smouldering wick. He will faithfully bring forth justice. <sup>4</sup> He will not become faint and will not be broken until He establishes justice on the earth. The coastlands will wait for His teaching.”

<sup>5</sup> This is what God, the LORD, has said, the One who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth, together with what comes out of it, who gives breath to the people who are on it and spirit to those who walk on it: <sup>6</sup> “I am the LORD. I have called You in righteousness, that I may grasp Your hand and watch over You, and that I may appoint You as a Covenant for the people, and as a Light for the Gentiles, <sup>7</sup> to open eyes that are blind, to bring captives out of the dungeon and to bring those who live in darkness from the prison house. <sup>8</sup> I am the LORD. That is My Name, and I shall not give My glory to another or My praise to idols. <sup>9</sup> Look! The former predictions have taken place, and I am predicting new things. I am causing you to hear them before they spring up.”

### **Romans 6:1-11**

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, what shall we say? “Shall we go on sinning so that God may be more gracious to us?” <sup>2</sup> Certainly not! How shall we, who died to sin, live any longer in it? <sup>3</sup> Or do you not know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? <sup>4</sup> Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, so that, as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might begin to live a new life. <sup>5</sup> If we have been planted together with Him in the likeness of His death, then we shall be planted together with Him also in the

likeness of His resurrection. <sup>6</sup> We know that our old self was crucified with Him, that our sinful bodies might be rendered powerless, in order that we might not be slaves to sin any longer. <sup>7</sup> For the one who has died has been declared free from sin. <sup>8</sup> If we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, <sup>9</sup> because we know that, since Christ was raised from the dead, He will not die again. Death no longer has any mastery over Him. <sup>10</sup> For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all, but the life that He lives He lives to God. <sup>11</sup> So you too, reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus!

### **Matthew 3:13-17**

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptised by him. <sup>14</sup> However, John tried to prevent Him. He said, “I need to be baptised by You, and are You coming to me?”

<sup>15</sup> Jesus answered him, “Permit it to be so now! For that is how it is proper for us to fulfil all righteousness.”

Then John allowed Him. <sup>16</sup> When Jesus had been baptised, He immediately came up from the water. At that moment the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming on Him. <sup>17</sup> Suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is **My Son, whom I love, and in whom I am well pleased.**”

## **TO FULFIL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS**

### **Sermon for the Baptism of our Lord, 2023**

### **Matthew 3:13-17**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel from before Matthew 3:13-17: **Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptised by him.**

<sup>14</sup> **However, John tried to prevent Him. He said, “I need to be baptised by You, and are You coming to me?”**

<sup>15</sup> **Jesus answered him, “Permit it to be so now! For that is how it is proper for us to fulfil all righteousness.”**

**Then John allowed Him. <sup>16</sup> When Jesus had been baptised, He immediately came up from the water. At that moment the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming on Him. <sup>17</sup> Suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My Son, whom I love, and in whom I am well pleased.”**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The baptism of Jesus is an important event. This is why the Christian Church sets aside the first Sunday after the Epiphany every year to focus on the baptism of Jesus. Jesus’ baptism is recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke and referred to in John’s Gospel. Clearly, our heavenly Father wants us to know that Jesus was baptised and what it means for us.

The baptism of Jesus is recorded early in the gospels and marks the launching of Christ’s public ministry. From here in the Jordan, Jesus will set out to do what He had come to do, which was to bring in the kingdom of heaven by saving His people from their sins. This was Jesus’ inauguration day, if you will, the day when He would take up His office as the promised Messiah. After Jesus was baptised, **“the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming on Him. <sup>17</sup> Suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My Son, whom I love, and in whom I am well pleased.”**

The opening of the heavens after Jesus’ baptism was much more than the parting of clouds so that the sun could shine through. It was more like the experience of the prophet Ezekiel who wrote, *“The heavens were opened and I saw visions of God”* (Ezekiel 1:1). Or we think of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. *“‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God’”* (Acts 7:56). By highlighting the Spirit of God that descended like a dove on Jesus, Matthew was proclaiming that Jesus is the One promised long ago in the Servant Songs of Isaiah.<sup>1</sup> Matthew proclaimed Jesus’ identity as the Lord’s Servant who, having received the Spirit of God, would bring justification to the nations, gently ministering to the “smouldering wick”

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<sup>1</sup> Especially in Is 42:1-4 and Is 61:1-9

and bringing hope to the peoples who trust in His name. Jesus, with the Spirit upon Him, would preach the Good News to the poor and comfort those mourning. And then we have the Father's voice.

What is the significance of the words **“This is My Son, whom I love, and in whom I am well pleased”**?

The Father's words from heaven identify Jesus from conception and birth<sup>2</sup> as God's Son because He is the summation of God's entire people Israel, God's “son.” Jesus, the Son, embodies the nation and has come in the place of its people. At the first exodus, God had constituted the nation as His “son.” When Moses was directed by the LORD to return to Egypt, he was to say to Pharaoh, *“This is what the LORD has said: ‘Israel is My first-born son! Therefore, I have told you: ‘Let My son go that he may worship Me!’”* (Exodus 4:22). And already, just before Jesus' baptism, Matthew had made reference to Jeremiah 31:20, where God, through the prophet, speaks of His love for Ephraim, saying, *“My child, in whom a father delights.”*

Now, at His baptism, Jesus has come as God's Son, the nation's representative, to be in the people's place. The One who has come to be baptised in the place of sinners does so as God's sinless Son by right, to save God's “son,” lost in sin. Jesus is truly the Son of God, both in His person and in His purpose.

While Mark, Luke, and John, bring out these points about the Spirit's descent and the Father's voice, as does Matthew in our text today, it is only in Matthew's account that we find the little dialogue that goes on between John the Baptist and Jesus, before John consents to baptise Him. So, let's look at this dialogue.

First, let's set the scene. What was going on when Jesus came to be baptised?

John the Baptist was baptising many people out at the Jordan River at that time and preaching, *“Repent! For the kingdom of heaven has come near”* (Matt. 3:2). People from all around were heeding that message. They were coming to John at the Jordan to be baptised and confess their sins.

There were also others coming out to see what was going on, some Pharisees and Sadducees. Whether or not they actually wanted to be baptised, since that seemed to be the popular thing to do, and they wanted to look good in front of others - in any case, John called them out and stopped them in their tracks. He said, *“You brood of poisonous snakes, who warned you to flee from the coming*

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 1:18-25

wrath? Therefore, produce fruit that is worthy of repentance!” (Matt. 3:7-8). John spoke of a coming end-time judgment, as well as an end-time salvation, and he saw both connected to the person coming after him, the Mightier One, whose sandals he was not worthy to carry. John was speaking of course of Christ, the mighty end-time Judge and Saviour.

So here comes Jesus, that Mightier One Himself. Only Jesus is coming, not as the mighty end-time Judge. He’s not wielding an axe to chop down trees or carrying a winnowing fork in His hand to cast the chaff into the fire. He’s not doing that. He’s not coming as the mighty Lord. Instead, He comes as just another Israelite, needing to be baptised. And this throws John off. He doesn’t understand.

Matthew writes how “**John tried to prevent Him.**” How come? Why did he want to prevent Jesus from being baptised? Was it because He was not bearing fruit fit for repentance, like the Pharisees and the Sadducees? No, that wasn’t it - quite the opposite. The thing was, Jesus didn’t have any sins to repent of! That’s what threw John off. Why would Jesus need to be baptised? He was no sinner. He didn’t have any sins to confess.

However, in the presence of Jesus’ holiness and sinlessness, John is painfully aware of *his own* unholiness and sinfulness: “**I need to be baptised by You, and are You coming to me?**” John asks incredulously.

How many of us are aware of our sinfulness, as John was? Here was John, “*the greatest born among women,*” as Jesus would later describe him<sup>3</sup> - John, a man set apart for the Lord and filled with the Holy Spirit even from before his birth - and if John declares his need in this way, how much more should we! For you and I do have sins to confess, many of them. How deeply and desperately we need God’s forgiveness!

But Jesus? No way! That’s why John tried to prevent Him. But Jesus is gently insistent. He answers John: “**Permit it to be so now! For that is how it is proper for us to fulfil all righteousness.**” What does Jesus mean by this? Why does He want to be baptised?

He starts by saying, “**Permit it to be so now!**” In other words, “*Permit it for now, at this time.*” You see, John was expecting a mighty entrance from this Mighty One, the Christ, the omnipotent end-time Judge. And Jesus is saying:

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 11:11

*“Yes, John, you will see that. Just not at this time. For right now, I’ve got something else to do. In fact, what I’m about to do is what will lead to that final, end-time judgment and salvation. It is necessary for Me to do what I’m about to do, in order to get to that final point. This is how I’m going to bring in the kingdom of heaven and do the judgment-and-salvation thing. It’s just going to take a little different route from what you were expecting. Bear with Me on this. I know what I’m doing.”*

**“Permit it to be so now!”** Jesus says, and then He continues, **“For that is how it is proper for us to fulfil all righteousness.”**

**“It is proper.”** As we mentioned earlier, at His baptism, Jesus had come as God’s Son, the representative of the nation, to be in the people’s place. He had come to be baptised in the place of sinners. This is how Jesus was going to save sinners - by standing in with them, standing in for them, and acting as their Substitute.

Remember what the angel had told Joseph years earlier about why this Child was to be named Jesus? *“She will give birth to a son, and you shall name Him ‘Jesus’! For He will save His people from their sins”* (Matt. 1:21). And so now, thirty years later, here comes Jesus, living up to His name. He’s embarking on His saving mission, to save people from their sins, precisely by standing in for us, taking our place, beginning with this baptism and aiming for the cross. That’s why this baptism is so fitting.

**“Permit it to be so now! For that is how it is proper for us to fulfil all righteousness.”** You know, there’s been a lot of “fulfilling” going on in Matthew’s gospel so far. Jesus’ birth had fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. And now Jesus says that His being baptised and going forward as the Substitute for sinners - that this is to **“fulfil all righteousness.”** It fulfils God’s righteousness, purpose, and plan to save, rescue, and redeem His people.

The Old Testament speaks much about God’s righteousness in this way. Psalm 71 is a classic example. There, the psalmist prays: *“In Your righteousness rescue me and deliver me!”* and *“My tongue will also talk about Your righteousness all day long”* (2, 24). Likewise, the prophet Jeremiah foresees the day when the Messiah will come and execute righteousness in the land, and the people will be saved, and His name will be called *“The LORD Our Righteousness”* (23:6). These Old Testament passages are all fulfilled in Christ, of course. And this is why Jesus can say that His being baptised and setting out on His mission in this way is fitting to **“fulfil all righteousness.”**

**“To fulfil all righteousness.”** God’s righteousness is shown in keeping His promise and acting in history to deliver on His promises by delivering us from our sins. And this is what Christ has come to do. Now it begins in earnest here at His

baptism, and what is so fitting about this is that it is precisely in His standing in for sinners that Christ will accomplish this. And just as the Father voiced His approval of Christ at His baptism, so the Father will approve of Christ's substitutionary death on the cross, when the Father then raises Christ from the dead on the third day.

And all of this now - God's righteousness, Christ's substitutionary death, His resurrection, God's forgiveness and eternal salvation - all of this now gets delivered and applied to us, with our name on it, in our baptism. In the waters of holy baptism, we have been joined to the Jesus who stood in the waters of the Jordan and in our place on the cross.

Do we need to be baptised by Christ, as John the Baptist confessed? Well, yes we do. And that is what Christ has done when He baptised us. All our sins were washed away by virtue of that Man standing in the river and going to the cross. The Spirit of God has come down upon us, giving us new hearts and bestowing God's favour and blessing upon us. The Father's voice has come from heaven, declaring us to be His beloved children. In our baptism, we have been joined to Jesus, connected to Him in His death and resurrection, buried with Him into death, and raised with Him in His resurrection. We are new people by virtue of our baptism and have real purposes in life, with a bright future ahead of us. Yes, we still have our own crosses to bear, but nothing can take away the blessings of our baptism. So, when these crosses do get you down, do a Luther and say out loud, "*I am baptised.*" That's what he would do every time he was tormented by the devil. Do it! It will make all your crosses disappear. Remember that you are a new person by baptism. You have a real purpose to your life, and you have a bright hope ahead of you. You have the gift of the Holy Spirit given to you in baptism. Paul writes to the Ephesians, "*You were also sealed in Him by the Holy Spirit, whom God promised. That Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance until God redeems us to be His very own, that His glory may be praised*" (Ephesians 1:14). A seal marked ownership. and leaves its image. Through Baptism, the promised Spirit makes us His dwelling.<sup>4</sup>

**"To fulfil all righteousness."** That's why it was fitting for Jesus to be baptised. For this righteousness, God's righteousness, is fulfilled as Jesus goes forward from the Jordan to save us from our sins and to bring us all the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, that's a fitting way for us to think of the baptism of our Lord and to live in the joy and blessing of our own baptism. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

## PRAYER FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Lord God, heavenly Father, we praise You that You have revealed Your will and wisdom in the life of Your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. We praise You that You have given us the gift of Your Holy Spirit in our baptism, and that in baptism You have acknowledged us as Your dear children. We praise You that in the baptism of Your Son in the Jordan You marked Him out as the Messiah to be our true representative, to fulfil all righteousness, and, as our Substitute, to give Himself in sacrifice for our sin and death. We praise You that, as Jesus saw the heavens opened when He was baptised, You have assured us of eternal life, where we shall see Your heaven opened to us.

Through Your Holy Spirit renew the mind of Christ in us, and let it grow in us. As Jesus began His public ministry for us at His baptism, we thank You for the privilege of regarding our baptism as our commissioning to serve You. Make us ready to give ourselves sacrificially for others, as Jesus has done, in ways that glorify You.

In mercy care for the spiritual welfare of all our baptised children. Give us grace as parents to show Your will and way to those who have yet to learn all that Christ has commanded us, by faithful worship, love for Your Word, and the desire to walk in the ways of Christ at all times. Free us all from being like this world. Transform us inwardly, that all our thoughts, words, and deeds may reflect Your perfect will.

Bless those who are one in confession with us in the fellowship of Your Church. Pour out Your blessing and strength on our pastor, that he may preach and teach Your Word with warmth and energy, and let the light of Your Gospel shine to people in darkness. Bless the witness of us all to the power of Jesus Christ to save sinners. Fill us with increasing zeal for the salvation of people who do not yet know Him as their Saviour, and for the extension of His kingdom. Send Your Holy Spirit to all Your people, to overcome weakness in Your Church, to remove all indifference, to cast out all fear of human beings, to reject the love of the world, and to banish all lukewarmness.

Grant that we may find strength in Your almighty power and daily care. Show Your mercy and goodness to the sick, the lonely, the bereaved, and the suffering. Teach them to cast their cares on You. Show them that You are not dealing with them in wrath, but in love, for Jesus' sake.

Help, heal, uphold, and strengthen us all, and in all things enable us to rejoice in Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, whom we adore, with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Article: The Promise of Salvation through Baptism is for All!**

The promise of salvation through baptism is for all. When the church was born, infants were included in baptism as well. Acts 2:38 says: “*Repent and let everyone of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*” And what does the very next verse, Acts 2:39, say? “*For this promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far away, all whom the Lord, our God, calls.*” The word for children used here is “*teknois*” which includes children of any age, even infants. But does that mean the people’s own children? If the promise is for their children, it would include their babies.

But could the promise here refer to their more distant descendants? In other words, could the promise refer to their descendants in general? In that case, age would not be the issue. But if that route is taken, the promise of the Spirit and forgiveness would be given *apart* from the person’s own repentance. A distant descendant would be given the Spirit and forgiveness on the basis of a distant ancestor’s faith! And who would propose that all of these people’s descendants through history would automatically be given these blessings? That wouldn’t make any sense at all of this passage!

Rather, Peter is relaying this promise to those present who had heard his gospel message and anyone else who will “repent and be baptised.” The promise of the Holy Spirit was also for the children and infants present. They were to be baptised with their parents. That way they would receive the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sins. They too would become members of God’s newly born church!

So, when Paul wrote to the Ephesian church (6:1-3), he wrote directly also to the “children” (*teknois*). Again, the word “*teknois*” includes infants. So infants are members of God’s church. And yet only a few verses before in Ephesians 5:25-26, Paul says: “*Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might make the church holy, by making her clean with the Washing of water by the Word!*” Christ’s baptism is for the church. Infants, then, should be baptised and so cleansed by the “*Washing of water by the Word.*” In the same way, children are identified as members of the Colossian church (Colossians 3:20). And there too, membership in the church is given through baptism (Colossians 2:12,19).

Baptism, as Peter said in Acts 2:38, is full of God’s promises for the youngest. In baptism, they receive the full forgiveness of their sins, sins of which they are unconscious. And they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit who preserves them in the Lord Jesus. And God is always faithful in His promises. For this, parents can only rejoice and praise the Lord, a Lord who cares for all, even the tiniest of people!

## Children's Message:

Remember how two weeks ago we celebrated Jesus' birthday? We remember Jesus was born on Christmas Day. But actually, today is another birthday for Jesus. Today is His baptismal birthday. Any idea what that means? Your baptismal birthday is the day you were baptised, just like your regular birthday is the day you were born. Today we celebrate the day Jesus was baptised.

In our Gospel today, Matthew tells us that Jesus went to the Jordan River where John the Baptist was baptising lots of people, and Jesus Himself was baptised. Did you hear what happened when Jesus was baptised? *“At that moment the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming on Him. Suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My Son, whom I love, and in whom I am well pleased”* (Matt. 3:16-17).

Now Jesus didn't need to be baptised for Himself, because He didn't have any sins to wash away. But He did it to be one of us so that when we're baptised we can be with Him. Jesus was baptised just like we are. John the Baptist took water and baptised Jesus like the pastor did when you were baptised. The Holy Spirit came to Jesus just like He came to you at your baptism. When you were baptised, our Father in heaven was pleased with you. You're His beloved child. In your Baptism, God washes away all your sins and gives you the gift of faith in Him.



So then, just like we celebrate Jesus' baptismal birthday today, you can celebrate your baptismal birthday with your family. Ask your parents to find out the date you were baptised, and then celebrate it as a birthday party each year. Maybe your parents still have the gown you wore when you were baptised. Ask them to bring them out as a reminder of your baptism. But even more, each time we hear God's name, we can make the sign of the cross, the same sign that the pastor made on our hearts the day we were each baptised. This reminds us that Jesus died to take away our sins and that now we are God's children. *Thank You Jesus, because through holy baptism I have now been joined to Your death and resurrection and am a child of God. Amen.*

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

<b>15 January 2 Epiphany</b>	<b>22 January 3 Epiphany</b>	<b>29 January 4 Epiphany</b>
8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am LOWOOD HC	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR	10.00am HC AUB AELC Service
<b>15 January</b>		
READINGS: Isaiah 49:1-7;                      1 Corinthians 1:1-9;                      John 1:29-42a		
HYMNS: 46 39 271 (320 291) 368		
<b>22 January</b>		
READINGS: Isaiah 9:1-4    1 Corinthians 1:10-18;                      Matthew 4:12-25		
HYMNS: 504 217 366 (157 51) 341		

Please take home with you today a copy of the latest Seminary Committee minutes.

“I [i.e., God] have given you baptism as a gift for the forgiveness of sins, and preach to you unceasingly by word of mouth concerning this treasure, sealing it with the Sacrament of my body and blood, so that you need never doubt. True, it seems little and insignificant that by the washing of water, the Word, and the Sacrament this should all be effected. But don't let your eyes deceive you.”

Martin Luther