

# *South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges*

## *Baptism of Jesus Sunday – January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021*

**Prelude:** “He Touched Me” – Christie Coatsworth

### **Welcome & Announcements:**

Good morning!

Thank you for your information for our Annual Meetings. We are working to have reports ready by next Sunday, January 17<sup>th</sup>. Continue to send South Buxton reports to [southbuxtonpc@gmail.com](mailto:southbuxtonpc@gmail.com), and Talbot Street reports to Tracey at [secretary4tsuc@gmail.com](mailto:secretary4tsuc@gmail.com). Thank you for all you do for our churches and Pastoral Charges.

Continue to keep in touch with others and to share our websites; at [southbuxton.ca](http://southbuxton.ca), and [talbotstreet.ca](http://talbotstreet.ca)

Thank you to Christie Coatsworth for our music this morning. Thank you to Tracey Major for putting together the Power Point slides.

### **Lighting of the Christ Candle:**

### **Call To Worship:**

**Eric:** We have come once again to be in the presence of the baptismal waters,

**People:** so that we may be reminded that God’s love seeps into our lives, washes away our fears, and pours forth for all people.

**Eric:** Come, let us worship.

### **Opening Hymn:** VU 382 “Breathe on Me, Breath of God”

- 1 Breathe on me, breath of God,  
fill me with life anew,  
that I may love what thou dost love,  
and do what thou wouldst do.
- 2 Breathe on me, breath of God,  
until my heart is pure,  
until my will is one with thine,  
to do and to endure.

### **Opening Prayer:**

**God, we ask that you remind us that you are the source of all that gives us life: water, earth, warmth and wind. In our worship today, may we take a few moments to be still and breathe in your Spirit. Amen.**

**Scripture:** Mark : 4 – 11 – “A Letter to John the Baptizer” *(Read by Sean Nicholas)*

Dear John, I am writing with the utmost appreciation for your work and admiration for your courageous work. There is no doubt in our minds that you are a gift to us because of your great leadership and spiritual wisdom.

This is precisely why we need your help to settle an argument in my household. You see, we had been living peacefully enough – if a bit disconnected from the more faithful of our friends and family members. When we began to hear stories about Jesus’ teaching and authority, we became curious. One day we heard he was going to visit the Jordan to see you. We had heard about you from friends who had been baptized by you so we thought we could renew our friendships and perhaps bolster our faith if we were to visit you when Jesus was also visiting. So, we decided to try to match the dates of our visit with the time we heard he would be visiting you.

On our way, we began to reflect on how much we hoped you would be the prophet who would help us understand the prophecies that cause us so many arguments in our home. When we arrived, we were caught off guard by the chaos of the crowd. People were agitated when we thought they would be calm. You had people worked up!

When we finally caught sight of Jesus, you two were arguing like old Rabbis. I must admit that brought me a little comfort. I’ve seen Sadducees and Pharisees argue – they don’t have any passion in their voices. Your conversation with Jesus was different. You were both energetic. My wife and I laughed to see you two argue the way we argue!

It surprised us then that when you stopped arguing, you baptized him. I would have thought you two would never reconcile as I watched you in conflict with one another. But you made amends as quickly and as passionately as you started in to argue.

As you baptized him, I noticed he behaved as one of us; he was humble and at peace – as if he were subordinate to you. As we watched him come out of the water, we saw a dove descend. But it was after this that we became especially confused. I heard a voice. I know I heard a voice say, “My beloved,” “I am pleased.” but I couldn’t tell who had spoken. My wife tells me she heard a voice, too. Until we talked it over, we thought it was coming from one of the crowd, which would have been strange enough... but then we decided it was not one of the elders nearby.

We have been arguing about this one question. Could it have been the voice of God? Did you hear it? Is Jesus the one we heard about in the prophecies?

My wife and I are now arguing like the Rabbis... please help restore peace to our home the way you restored the peace with Jesus, Benjamin

**Message:** “Jesus is Baptized”

Each and every year on this week of the New Year, we hear the story of Jesus being baptized – albeit we hear the story each year from different gospels. Baptism is a key element of our Christian faith, and connecting our baptism with Jesus’ baptism gives us a personal connection. Today’s story of Jesus’ baptism is shared as a letter to John the Baptist from Benjamin, an interested follower of John and then Jesus. Benjamin gives us a look at his experiences, thoughts and emotions of seeing Jesus being baptized by John. We hear the story year after year as a story – do we ever place ourselves on the shore of the Jordan River and experience what it might

be like to watch Jesus and many others be baptized – like Benjamin has done for us today?

Mark starts his Gospel telling us about who John the Baptist is. John wore clothes made of camel hair. He had a leather strap around his waist and ate grasshoppers and honey. John the Baptist showed up in the desert and told everyone, “Turn back to God and be baptized! Then your sins will be forgiven”. We are told crowds of people from Jerusalem and Judea went to John, and told him how sorry they were for their sins, and John baptized them in the Jordan River.

When Benjamin found out that Jesus was planning a trip to visit John at the Jordan, he wanted to be there. Why? God only knows! When John told the people, “Someone more powerful is going to come. And I am not good enough even to stoop down and untie his sandals. I will baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!” - Benjamin got excited. He knew something was up – something new, something that will challenge his faith. So he writes to John to find out more.

How many times have we heard about the conversations between John and Jesus? We likely wouldn't call it an argument. But could it have been like Benjamin has suggested – like two old Rabbis arguing. Benjamin shares “like two old Rabbis” versus Sadducees and Pharisees as they like to argue just to show off, and they do not have any passion in their voices. Imagine the idea of two old Rabbis; they have experienced life, their thoughts are very refined from years of teaching and discernment, their words are words of wisdom. That is what Benjamin sees as John and Jesus argue about who should baptize who. Their conversation is energetic, even genuine.

Then when Jesus says, “Do as God has planned”, John stops talking and gets to work. John baptizes Jesus. Benjamin thought there was no way John would baptize Jesus, but they made amends quickly and passionately, as John baptized Jesus.

Some Christian faith leaders feel that it is important for all Christians to think and to feel the same way. Other think that asking the questions and seeking answers for questions that we do not comprehend – is a very important part of our faith journey. I am drawn to our Wednesday morning Faith Talks and the times when Andrew and I share different opinions or thoughts about a certain scripture. We respect each other's thought and even try to see ourselves understanding where the other is coming from. I believe that if I am going down the wrong road, that Andrew or even one of the Faith Talk participants will show me where I am off

course. If all that fails – I am confident that the Holy Spirit will keep me wondering, yet keep me on the right path. I think that is the message Benjamin is sharing with us today in his letter to John.

I have been baptized with water, and I trust I also have been baptized by the Holy Spirit. Being like Jesus in Baptism, I also share with Jesus the blessing that God gives to Jesus on his baptism. “You are my beloved, with who I am well pleased”. Not only do I believe I have received God’s blessing in my baptism, I also feel that every baptized person also has received God’s blessing in their baptism. The very foundation of our Christian faith is that Christ became human, so we as humans can experience God, through the Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Today’s story shares the Trinity together in Jesus’ baptism.

As with Jesus’ baptism and as our own, we as the church offer the space and ritual for God to be present – we call this a “sacrament”. In the United Church we have two recognized sacraments; Communion and Baptism. In both, we offer the space for God to be with us – today let us look at baptism.

John the Baptist and Jesus are in the Jordan River. They talk a bit about who should do what. Jesus reminds John that it is God’s plan for Jesus to be baptized by John, and John should not ignore God’s plan. John agrees to baptize Jesus.

Compare that to our baptism: We use liturgy to show each other how God wishes us to be God’s Children – that God wants us to baptize people as they become part of the Church of Christ – Jesus was baptized and so are we. Jesus is the Son of God, noted in his baptism, therefore we become sons and daughters of God in our baptism.

For John and Jesus this is full immersion baptism – meaning that you are submersed in the water. Common Christian thought is you are washed clean in the water, and arise as a new “clean of sin” human. Some thoughts are that while you are submersed, you die to your old ways, and as you rise up out of the water, you are born into your new Christian Life.

John baptizes Jesus, and as Jesus rises out of the water, the Holy Spirit comes down upon him, and a voice says, “This is my beloved, with whom I am well pleased”. John provides the ritual (which we call the sacrament) to baptize Jesus with water. This provides that “thin space” were God can accept the baptized as Children of God. As John says, “I baptize with water, Jesus will baptize you with the Holy Spirit”. We in the Christian Church provide the Sacrament (the Ritual) to

baptize with water, and we believe that God claims the baptized as God's own, and that Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

You may be thinking; “sounds good Eric, but what about all those people we have baptized and we haven't seen them since their baptism”? True, we have not seen them in Church, but what is God doing in their lives? Are they being lead by the Holy Spirit? Do they consider those special moments to be a “coincidence” or “a figment of their imagination”? Truth be told, we do not really know.

If there is one thing the COVID has done to our churches, is open us up - to all and any possibilities – many that we as a church would never have considered, yet we now use as part of new ways of following God. It makes sense that God would use us Christians to be the Church and to use the Church to enter into the world and be the hands and feet of God. How might God use someone outside of the church? Or do we believe that is possible, to be a child of God and not be Churched?

I'm sorry, I do not have all the answers, and like you, I have lots of questions. I will keep asking those questions until I get an answer that I can believe in, because growth in faith only starts at baptism – it takes a life-time to understand what is only a mustard seed of faith. We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

**Hymn: VU 99 “Christ, When For Us You Were Baptized”**

- 1 Christ, when for us you were baptized,  
God's Spirit on you came,  
as peaceful as a dove and yet  
as urgent as a flame.
- 2 God called you, 'My beloved Son,'  
called you, 'My servant true,'  
sent you God's kingdom to proclaim,  
God's holy will to do.
- 3 Straightway and steadfast until death  
you then obeyed the call  
freely as Son of Man to serve  
and give your life for all.
- 4 Baptize us with your Spirit now,  
your cross on us be signed,  
that likewise in God's service we  
may perfect freedom find.

### **Invitation to Share Our Gifts:**

**Eric:** As we share in Jesus' Baptism - we give in Love.

### **Offertory: VU 541 "Praise God From Whom..."**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

### **Offertory Prayer:**

**God who moves in, around and through the waters, we remember you are near. We dedicate a gift of gratitude to you, for your use. We come now in earnest hope and faith to offer what we have, do what we can, and let go of the outcome, knowing you will provide. Amen.**

### **Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer:**

**Eric:** God speaks as we speak to one another of our joy and sorrow.

**People: God moves as we draw closer to one another.**

**Eric:** May we speak aloud of love and pain, offering up the names or circumstances that remind us we belong to one another and God.

**People: Today we pray for those in hospital; Cleata and Ken**

**Eric:** We pray for those dealing with Cancer; Wayne, Karen, Jasmine, Tom, Randy, and David.

**People: We pray for those on our minds; Richard, June, Melonie, Susan, Zoe, Jerri, Willie and Harold, and those dealing with COVID and testing.**

**Eric:** God, may your healing touch be with those we named - and those on our minds.

**People: May we remember that we can give and receive.**

**Eric:** That we can bless and be blessed as we too come near the cleansing waters of baptism.

**People: May we kiss away tears and drink from the fountains of grace.**

**Eric:** This we ask in Jesus' Name, as we pray his prayer;

*Our Father, Who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven,  
Give us this day our daily bread, And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who  
trespass against us,  
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

### **Benediction:**

**Eric:** We may fail - God does not. We may end - God does not. We are blessed and a blessing, now and forever more.

**Postlude:** “Shall We Gather at the River” – Christie Coatsworth

**Prayers:** - Please include these people in your prayers this week.

We have offered prayer for these people each Sunday morning just before the Zoom Service.  
It was suggested to share these names with the total group – as “In the Spirit We Are One”.

In hospital:	Cleata	June
	Ken	Melonie
Cancer:	Wayne	Susan
	Karen	Zoe
	Jasmine	Jerri
	Tom	Willie
	Randy	Harold
	David	COVID testing
	Ross Family and Sean	
Special:	Richard	