

A Man Filled with the Spirit

Passages: Isaiah 42:1–9
 Luke 3:15 – 22

The Sunday before Christmas and on Christmas Day, we looked at two passages from the OT Book of Isaiah concerning the birth of Jesus, the Messiah. **Today, I would like to continue our studies in Isaiah**, but now I want to turn our attention to those prophecies concerning Jesus' life and ministry.

Let's pray.

As any good Anglican knows, the New Year began, not with the first day of January, but with the first Sunday of Advent. You may not realise it but the solar calendar that we use today is actually based around a number of Roman gods, kings and ancient pagan rituals:

Name	Comes from	Who or what?	Why?
January	Janus	God of Doors	This month opens the year.
February	februo	purify	This was a Roman month of sacrifices and purification.
March	Mars	God of War	Start of year for soldiers (no fighting during winter)
April	aperire	Open	This is the month when trees open their leaves.
May	Maia	Goddess of Growth	This is the month when plants really start to grow.
June	Juno	Queen of the Gods	
July	Julius Caesar	Ruler of Rome	He reorganised the calendar.
August	Augustus	Ruler of Rome	He thought he was at least as important as Julius Caesar!
September	septem	seven	Seventh month (counting from March)
October	octo	Eight	Eighth month (counting from March)
November	novem	Nine	Ninth month (counting from March)
December	decem	Ten	Tenth month (counting from March)

The ancient **church** calendar, however, is very different! The early church believed that the New Year officially began on the first Sunday of Advent (four Sundays before Christmas) as they anticipated the birth of Messiah. In order to accentuate this understanding, OT Prophecies (like those of Isaiah) would be read during Advent which pointed forward to the Messiah's arrival as a baby and what that birth would mean. In other words, the ancient church started their New Year in the confident knowledge that God had come into our world as a babe in a manger to save the world from the power of sin and darkness! With this truth in mind, each New Year was a joyful celebration acknowledging the hope of new beginnings in Christ's incarnation!

But, of course, the Christian calendar didn't stop there. After Christmas came the celebration of baby Jesus' circumcision and presentation in the Temple of Jerusalem. This was followed by the visit of the three wise men as they made their way to Jesus' bedside to pay him homage with gold, frankincense and myrrh! (We call this 'Epiphany'.)

But, once again, the ancient church calendar didn't stop there. Once the wise men returned to their homeland in the East, the next event in the church's calendar that would be celebrated (this Sunday, in fact) was **the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River!** That's why today's Bible readings from Isaiah 42 and Luke 3 are the set lectionary readings for today.

This, of course, may seem a bit strange! After all, in the course of one week, we have made a huge leap -- a 30 year leap to be exact -- as the calendar suddenly jumps from the **baby Jesus**, born in Bethlehem and lying in a manger, to the **adult Jesus** (30 years old, to be exact) being baptised by John in the Jordan River.

Why such a big leap? Well, one obvious reason is that the Scriptures say very little about Jesus childhood. Clearly, there was nothing really noteworthy that could be included

in the Christian calendar. And so, it jumps from Jesus birth to His baptism in the blink of an eye.

But perhaps another reason for this 30-year jump comes from the fact that the baptism of Jesus was, in many ways, very similar to Jesus' birth; that is, both the birth of Jesus and the baptism of Jesus are signs of new beginnings for the church! You see, suddenly, as Jesus turns 30, He steps out of obscurity and into the limelight. At His baptism, Jesus finally shows His true colours, as if the preaching of his cousin, John, has triggered something deep inside of Him and He becomes a new man! Indeed, with Jesus' baptism, you'd be right in thinking that something **brand new** was about to happen in Israel...and in the world!

Indeed, this is exactly what Isaiah, the prophet, had said would happen in our reading for today!

⁹See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.

The Messiah, the Spirit-filled Servant of God, would come to inaugurate something brand new! And what would His new beginning look like? Listen again to Isaiah's vision:

***"Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will bring justice to the nations.***

***²He will not shout or cry out,
or raise his voice in the streets.***

***³A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.***

In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;

***⁴ he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.***

In his teaching the islands will put their hope."

According to Isaiah's prophesy, the Spirit-baptism of Messiah would mean that at least three new things would take place:

1. The Messiah would initiate a new movement of **justice** for the downtrodden (v1).

2. He would initiate a new outpouring of **compassion** for the broken and hurting (vv2–3)
3. He would initiate a new sense of **hope** for the hopeless (v4).

If you look at Luke 3, you will see that these three ‘new things’ began to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ when He was baptised in the Jordan River by his cousin, John, and the Spirit of God fell upon Him without measure.

1. Justice:

Up until Jesus was baptised, who was responsible for justice in Israel? Officially, this responsibility fell on two key people: The King and the High Priest. Of course, in Jesus’ day, there was no king in Israel and the High Priest was totally corrupted by Rome. As a result, there was little justice in Israel. The poor continued to be downtrodden; the weak and the powerless continued to be abused; minorities were subjected to discrimination.

But, from the day of His baptism, Jesus fought to reverse these injustices. This is what John was referring to when, in speaking about the coming Messiah, he said that **“His winnowing fork was in His hands to clear His threshing floor!”**. In other words, in the power of His baptism, Jesus was going to rectify the wrongs and injustices throughout the land, destroying evil with the fire of His righteous judgement!

Indeed, it is highly likely that Jesus understood His own baptism in this light; as a divine ordination–ceremony into the role of Israel’s **King and High Priest**. His coronation, however, would not be by the hands of earthly kings or priests but by the hand of God alone! Hence, the voice from heaven cried out, **“This is my Son!”**, and the Spirit of God fell without measure on this new king, in much the same way that He fell upon the anointed Kings and priests of Old Testament times.

In this act of baptism, Jesus was both commissioned and empowered to bring justice to the nations; to execute judgment on behalf of the poor and the oppressed...just like

Isaiah had prophesied! And this is exactly what He does throughout His three-year ministry—He speaks up for, the down-trodden and the poor and brings healing to the weak and the disabled. God's justice has come in Jesus.

2. Compassion:

It's important to remember that Jesus' baptism was not done in private, nor in a rich man's palace, or in the hidden confines of the Temple. Jesus' baptism took place in a dirty river, surrounded by a multitude of common people. Verse 21 says, "**when all the people were being baptised by John, Jesus was baptised too.**" This is important because He, who came down from heaven, came down to be one with us. This is what compassion is all about! (The word 'compassion' literally means to suffer with.) Not only was Jesus born into our common humanity, He was also baptised into our common humanity. In other words, as our newly anointed High Priest and King, He was not aloof from the human race but intimately at one with it...tied to us by a common bond and willing to suffer with us through every earthly situation.

Remember what Isaiah had predicted of Him? ² **He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets.**³ **A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out."**

Clearly, Isaiah's image of Messiah was of a man of intense compassion! And Luke 3 tells us that Jesus fulfilled that image! In deep compassion for the human race, Jesus met us where we are...as lost sinners...to suffer with us in order to bring us home to the Father!

3. Hope:

We've already made mention of the fact that when Jesus was baptised in the Jordan River, His Father's voice was heard proclaiming, "**You are my beloved son; with you I am well-pleased!**" while the Spirit came down like a dove and alighted upon Him. In this way, Jesus was anointed with power to bring justice to the world.

The trouble is, however, that we don't yet see the fullness of God's justice on this earth. This is where hope comes in! As verse 4 says:

4 he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth.

Our hope is in the fact that Jesus will not give up until He has accomplished perfect justice on this earth! Even though we may not see the perfection of justice today, we can be assured that it will come one day!

This hope is also bolstered by the fact that, at the moment of His baptism, Jesus fully revealed our future! In His baptism, we actually see what the human race is meant to look like as the perfect reflection of Father's will. This means that, as we look at Jesus and listen to His teaching, we can finally understand the true nature of God and His intentions for the Universe! Hope that is based in Jesus is a hope based in the reality of a true knowledge of God's plans for the world!

Here is the foundation of hope! This is what Isaiah could see when he prophesied, "**In his teaching the islands will put their hope.**" Finally, someone has come who can show us the Father and explain the mystery of His great love for us; a love that will carry us into the future; a love that we can already taste in the person of Jesus Christ. Without doubt, this is the most incredible source of our hope!

The baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River, 2000 years ago, marks the beginning of a New Year! Why? Because, as every good Anglican knows, we do not bow down to the pagan calendar of Roman gods and the influence of the stars, but to Jesus; the One who was **born** for us as a baby in a manger and **baptised** for us as an adult **to mark a new beginning of justice, compassion and hope for all who dwell on this earth.**