

Son of God

10 1 16

Eternal Father,
who at the baptism of Jesus
revealed him to be your Son,
anointing him with the Holy Spirit:
grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit,
that we may be faithful to our calling
as your adopted children.

Our text may be found in today's gospel and is Luke chapter 3 and verse 22:

'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

Today, we mark the Baptism of Christ. A couple of weeks ago, we were fortunate to witness the baptism of little Philippa, the daughter of Tanya and Didier Henry whom I married here in St Bart's back in 2009 and whose brother, William, I baptised here in 2011. Baptism is special in that it marks the beginning of our life as Christians, our anointing with the Holy Spirit, the washing away of our sins and our public declaration that we are the children of God, sons and daughters of our Father in heaven, by adoption brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today I'd like to focus on one word that Jesus heard as he emerged naked, dripping wet, from the waters of the river Jordan: **'Son'** – **'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'** And I like to ask two Questions:

- 'What does it mean for Jesus to be the Son of God ?'

and

- 'When did he know who he was ?'

Firstly, then, 'What does it mean for Jesus to be the Son of God ?'

There are inevitably different answers to question. The answer will depend largely on where the response is coming from. Jesus of Nazareth – a revolutionary; Jesus the carpenter – a trouble maker; Jesus, son of Mary – a good man. The mainstream, orthodox, Christian view of Jesus is that he is the second person of the Trinity; that he is the Son of God incarnate: that he was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died and rose again from the dead, that he ascended into heaven and will, one day, come again to judge the living and the dead. Jesus was brought up a Jew: circumcised on the eighth day and presented in the Temple on the fortieth. Jesus taught, performed miracles, healings, exorcisms, and was eventually arrested and executed.

There are several Christological titles that describe Jesus. Among them, my favourites are **Son of God, Son of Man, Son of David**. All three use the word 'Son' which embodies the idea of kinship, blood relationship, family. By using the word 'Son' of Jesus, we can see that in a spiritual sense, our God in the flesh has manifested himself in his creation here on earth in Palestine, embodied in time and place and space in a person, in a human being: – someone like us but unlike us: someone who is both fully what it is to be human and fully what it is to be God.

Secondly, let me ask 'When did he know who he was ?'

We can't be sure but, certainly, Jesus heard, according to Matthew and Luke's account of his baptism, God the Father's words of approbation which are our text today. A similar phrase is used in the account of the Transfiguration: '**This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him**'(Mk 9 v7). Immediately, before the Transfiguration, Jesus asks his disciples who they think he is and Peter says straight out unequivocally, '**You are the Messiah**' (Mk 8 v29). Certainly, from the outset of his ministry, demons about to be exorcised, knew who he was. In Mark chapter 1, in the Capernaum synagogue, Jesus was identified by an unclean spirit as '**the Holy One of God**' (v24). Of course, immediately after his baptism, Jesus did spend 40 days in the wilderness, fasting, to prepare himself for his ministry. But according to Luke, even at the age of 12, Jesus knew he had to be in the Temple, to '**be in his Father's house**' (2 v49).

But could the baby Jesus know who he was as he lay there in the manger for a crib newly born ? Humanly not possible; divinely most likely. I love the mystical poetry of John, describing Jesus as '**the word made flesh**' (1v14) and the incarnational statement of Paul to the Philippians that Christ '**though he was in the form of God . . . emptied himself . . . being born in human form**' (2 v6/7).

So, there you have it. Then, today, on the day that we mark the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ and, as the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, alights on Jesus, and we hear again the words from heaven, '**You are my Son, the Beloved; with you**

I am well pleased', it is well worth reflecting on our understanding of who Jesus is and when he knew it for a fact.

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

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G: Sermons 33 : Son of God

