

Dear Friends,

We are looking at the story of the baptism of Jesus. In it we see the relationship of love between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; the three persons who are one God. You are given an invitation to enter into and become a part of this relationship of love. We have been looking at one element of this, the invitation to join with the Spirit in moving towards Jesus. Now we may add another, the invitation to join with Jesus in being open to the Spirit.

At his baptism Jesus receives the Spirit. This is not something new. He is always brim full and overflowing with the Spirit. I wonder if the baptism simply gives a snapshot of something that is true for Jesus at every moment. The Spirit is always being poured out on him. He is always open to receive the Spirit. He allows himself to be moved by the Spirit. He is empowered, equipped, and strengthened, by the Spirit. He speaks with the inspiration of the Spirit.

This is made clear in Luke's gospel. Straight after his baptism, it says that Jesus is "full of the Holy Spirit". He is then "driven by the Spirit in the wilderness" where he faces the temptations. After that, he is described as being "filled with the power of the Spirit". In that power he sets out and travels from place to place teaching the people. Luke writes about one of these sessions. We hear how Jesus reads a passage from the scriptures which begins with the words "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me". He then tells the people that in him this teaching is being fulfilled. At this point, Luke stops pointing out at every turn that Jesus is being moved and empowered by the Spirit. My hunch is that he feels that he's made his point. From now on, you can take it as read that all that Jesus does and says is done and said in the power of the Spirit.

And you are invited to unite yourself with Jesus in receiving the Holy Spirit. You too may become channels of the Spirit's activity. You may be a means by which the Spirit's work is done and the Spirit's words are spoken.

John the Baptist says, "I baptise you with water; but the one who is more powerful than I is coming ... He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire". John baptised people in the river Jordan. He took them deep, down into the water, to a place where they were submerged and immersed in water, where they were entirely surrounded by water.

What John does with water Jesus seeks to do with the Spirit. He invites you into the river of the Spirit. He takes you deep, down into the Spirit, to a place where you are submerged and immersed in the Spirit, where you are entirely surrounded by the Spirit.

Not only does Jesus want the Spirit to be around you, he also wants the Spirit to be in you. As he is brim full of the Spirit, he invites you to be brim full of the Spirit. The picture of that can be found in John's gospel. It's the day of the resurrection. The friends of Jesus are hiding away with all the doors of the house locked. They are afraid. The risen Jesus appears amongst them. He says "Peace be with you".

He commissions them by saying "As the Father has sent me so I send you". And then he breathes on them and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit". Imagine how close he has to get to each of them so that they can feel his breath. Imagine Jesus getting that close to you, breathing on you, pouring the Spirit into you, making you to be like him, brim full of the Spirit.

You are invited to join with Jesus in being open to the Spirit.

God bless you,

Tony