

## **Sacredise Daily**

Personal Worship Resources for the Week:  
07-13 January 2018

### **Thought for the Week:**

The moment of baptism for Jesus is an important turning point in his life. It marks the start of his public ministry, but also tells us a lot more about Jesus than we may realise at first. John's baptism was about confession of sin and receiving forgiveness. Since Jesus was without sin, he had no need of John's baptism – which explains John's shock when Jesus arrived at the river. Jesus, however, chose to be baptised because he wanted us to know that he stands with us in our brokenness and sinfulness. He did not keep himself separate from us because we failed to meet his standards of holiness. Rather, he jumped right into the mess of our lives. He began by becoming one of us, and then he began to create a new community by inviting us into a different way of thinking, speaking, and being.

This means that Jesus' baptism was not just an event that happened to Jesus a long time ago. Jesus' baptism is an invitation that continues to beckon us today – to belong to a God-created, God-called community. And, if we choose to accept the invitation, we discover that we, like Jesus, become those who are called to stand alongside the broken and hurting, the sinful and wayward people of our world. And we are called to invite them, through our acts and words of grace, love, justice and challenge, to become part of God's new community.

Our meditations will help us to hear and respond to God's invitation this week.

### **Sunday 07 January 2018**

**Reading:** Mark 1:4-11

**Reflection:** How many times have you heard people say that they don't believe in God because of all the suffering in our world. The argument is that all the pain and evil proves that, either there can be no God, or if there is a God, then God has abandoned us, which

means that worship is useless. The problem with this thinking is that it views God in a very unhelpful way – as a divine superman who is wholly apart from us and who should (according to us) come swooping in to save the day whenever something goes wrong. It is also a very unhelpful view of human beings, since it sees us as essentially helpless and unable to participate in the healing of our world's suffering. As much as we ask God why God allows all the pain in our world, God could ask us the same question!

The story of Jesus' baptism reveals a very different picture of God and of us. First, God shows us what we need to do and become in order to experience full, abundant, and meaningful life, and gives us a choice to listen or not. Then, secondly, God comes and lives among us – within us – and shares our grief, our tears, our pain, our sin, while constantly calling us back to life. So, not only does God journey with us through our suffering. God also gives us the divine power and presence to navigate and heal our own brokenness. This is what Jesus' baptism means for us!

Where do you need God to stand with you today? How can you be more open to God's healing presence & power through this week?

**Practice for Today:** Perhaps the best way to stay aware of God's presence is to constantly practice praise. We praise God not because God needs us to, but because we need to be reminded that there is a God, and that God is always with us. Try to give praise for God's presence at every opportunity today.

**Breath-Prayer for Today:** I praise you, O Christ, that you are always with me.

### **Monday 08 January 2018**

**Reading:** Romans 4:1-12

**Reflection:** It has always been tempting to make religion about law. Laws are easy and clear – you either do them or you don't. Laws don't require soul-searching, confession or transformation. But, as Paul was always pointing out, God is not particularly concerned about law. Rather, for God it's about faith. But, the kind of faith God seeks is not just agreeing with certain ideas in our heads. It's about relationship, about commitment, about our whole lives being

oriented around God's presence and purposes. For Abraham, circumcision did not earn him God's favour. It was the sign of God's favour, which was already his!

In the Old Testament the act of circumcision was a sign that God's people were committing to living in relationship with God and with one another. In the New Testament, baptism is the equivalent sign – and even Jesus was prepared to share in it! Both circumcision and baptism only have meaning, though, when they are rooted in faith – in a deep, intimate connection with God that transforms us. That's why the apostle calls all people, Jew and Gentile, to faith in Christ. Baptism and Christlike living are not ways to earn God's grace. They are the sign that we are already accepted by God, and the fruit of our faith in God's grace.

How can you open yourself more to this kind of faith? How can you make a new commitment to God's presence and purposes in your own life today?

**Practice for Today:** Faith is not difficult to nurture, in spite of what some may think. In fact, to grow in faith, all you have to do is develop the practice of thanksgiving, because the more you see of God's grace and goodness in your life, the more you trust it. So, today, give thanks at every opportunity & let your faith grow.

**Breath-Prayer for Today:** Thank you, Dear God, for welcoming me into your family and for your constant grace.

### **Tuesday 09 January 2018**

**Reading:** Acts 22:2-16

**Reflection:** Last week we read the story of Paul's conversion from the perspective of the writer of Acts. Today, even though we're also reading from Acts, we get Paul's own version of his story. There are differences in these two accounts, but the message remains the same, and it retains its drama and excitement. It's wonderful to see how God took someone who was so opposed to Christ and turned him around, making him the most significant person in the establishment of the Church. God's grace is truly amazing!

I wonder if the reason Paul became so effective in his work was because he discovered a place to belong like he had never known

before. His life had been all about the law, and living it to perfection. But, then Jesus showed him that, even though he had harmed and persecuted Christ's followers, God still loved and accepted him. And one of the first things that happened after his conversion was that he was baptised – a sign of his welcome, his belonging to God's family. What a liberating gift this must have been for Paul.

How can you receive God's grace & welcome today? What might be stopping you from becoming more fully a part of God's family?

**Practice for Today:** Confession is often viewed as something distasteful – a shameful admission that there is nothing good in us. But, confession is really about removing anything that keeps us from God's life. It's dealing with our brokenness so we can be healed. Today allow confession to liberate you. Whenever you find yourself doing things that hurt yourself or others, just offer them to God and invite God's grace and welcome to fill you again.

**Breath-Prayer for Today:** Teach me, O God, to acknowledge and release whatever keeps me from your grace and love.

### **Wednesday 10 January 2018**

**Reading:** John 1:29-34

**Reflection:** John the Baptist was an amazing person, with an incredible vision of God's purposes, and he gave Jesus an amazing title – the Lamb of God. In the book of Revelation this image is expanded, and Christ is described as a lamb who has been slain. Somehow, John received a tremendous insight into who Jesus was and what he came to do. As he baptised Jesus, God's Spirit opened his eyes to understand how Jesus would stand with human beings and bring healing and restoration to them. His description of Jesus as the lamb may even indicate an awareness of how Jesus would lay down his life for the sake of love. Perhaps it was John's years in the wilderness that had enabled him to develop this strong capacity to hear God's voice, and to recognise the work of God's Spirit.

The ability to recognise God's activity is not just available to some special people like John. It is a capacity that we can all enjoy, if we will just do the work. Like John it often takes years in the "wilderness" of prayer, of the study of Scripture, of of Christian

community to really begin to see things from God's perspective. But, if we continue to faithfully nurture our relationship with God, we may also receive such divine insight.

In what ways can you open yourself more to the work of God's Spirit in your life and community today?

**Practice for Today:** One of the reasons we struggle to hear and see God is that our lives are filled with so much noise and so many "bright shiny objects" that capture our attention. Today, take time whenever you can to slow down and listen. Create moments of stillness and allow God's Spirit to awaken your awareness of God's presence and activity in your life.

**Breath-Prayer for Today:** Open my eyes and ears, God - I long to recognise your Spirit's work.

### **Thursday 11 January 2018**

**Reading:** Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

**Reflection:** When Jesus stepped into our flesh and our world, we saw that God was not separate from us, but intimately involved in our world. There is nowhere we can go that God is not present. As Richard Rohr states: "God is either everywhere or nowhere." This Psalmist had seen these truths hundreds of years before Jesus was born and he penned these words as he responded in awe and wonder to the grace and love of such a God.

The writer notes that we are intimately known and loved by God, but he also declares that all of our days are given by God for a purpose. Our lives are not really our own, but are connected with God, with God's universe, and with the stream of history that leads all of creation into God's salvation. We are here because God wants us to participate in God's life, and in sharing God's life with others. This means that our lives are not about ourselves, and they only find their true meaning and fulfilment when we give ourselves as an offering to partner with God in God's saving mission.

How can you make yourself an offering to God today?

**Practice for Today:** Today's practice is both very simple and very difficult. The act of dedicating ourselves requires little explanation,

but it takes everything we are – or at least as much of it as we know now. Today, try to dedicate yourself to God in every moment, every activity, and every interaction – for the sake of God's saving purposes.

**Breath-Prayer for Today:** All that I have and all that I am I offer to you, God of my life.

### **Friday 12 January 2018**

**Reading:** Acts 13:16-25

**Reflection:** The apostle Paul was clear in his preaching – the world needs a Saviour, and Jesus is it! He makes the case very strongly by showing Jesus' heritage as a descendant of David, as the one that John the Baptist preached about, and the one that God had promised in the Old Testament. But, a Saviour can do nothing if we do not recognise our need to be saved. Paul proclaims loud and clear that Jesus is available if we will only recognise our need of him.

To be saved by Christ does not mean only that we wait for some eternal bliss. Nor does it mean that we just sit back and let it happen to us. Rather, when Jesus comes to save us, he means to transform us, and to lead us into a new way of being that expresses the fullness of God's grace and life now. Once again, the sacrament of baptism is mentioned in today's reading, because it is the sign of God's welcoming, transforming, and saving grace. But, it is also a proclamation of our faith to those around us. Like John, we who have come to know God's love and restoration are called to reveal God's salvation to the world through lives that reflect the values and priorities of Jesus. Only when our lives naturally bring love, justice, and salvation to others, do we really experience God's gift of salvation for ourselves. This kind of salvation really does make a difference to our world, and we all need it.

How can you allow Jesus to save you - and others through you - a little more today?

**Practice for Today:** If we long for ourselves and our world to be saved, one of the best things we can do is pray. Prayer changes us, and opens us to God's saving power. Today, whenever you see or

feel a need that requires God's salvation, offer a quick prayer.

**Breath-Prayer for Today:** Come, O Jesus, and save us.

**Saturday 13 January 2018**

**Reading:** 1 Samuel 2:21-25

**Reflection:** This is another one of those uncomfortable readings that we would prefer to ignore. Eli's sons had rejected the ways of their father – the ways of God – and had fallen into evil and destructive behaviours. They committed violence against the women who served in the Temple with them and they used threats of force to rob people of their sacrifices. Even worship of God can be used for evil ends! As a result Eli had the unenviable task of rebuking his own sons and warning them of the destructive consequences of their actions. Eli knew that neither God nor any person could protect his sons when the consequences of their actions came back to haunt them - which they certainly would.

Eli's sons used their position as priests to abuse and manipulate the people who came to worship. Unfortunately, such destructive people can be found in every sphere of life, and it's tempting to become cynical about goodness when evil seems to triumph. But, tomorrow one of the set readings for worship is the story of how Samuel first heard God's call. It makes a sharp contrast to the story of Eli's sons. Even as evil seemed to be prevailing, God was at work calling a young boy who would bring God's grace to a nation, This is a sober reminder that God's salvation is always at work, but is never forced on anyone, and of how we must choose either to live in it or not.

In what ways can you embrace God's saving ways a little more today? In what ways can you invite others to enjoy God's grace and love?

**Practice for Today:** Those how have been saved and blessed by God are always called to share the blessing with others. Tomorrow we will also hear about the call of the disciples to follow Jesus. Today, we can prepare ourselves by recognising that we too are both called and sent by God to bring God's grace and justice into the world. In every moment try to remember that you are a "sent one" today.

**Breath-Prayer for Today:** Here I am, Jesus – send me.

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