

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2022 Evensong  
Baptism of Christ**

**Liverpool Parish Church**

**OT: Isaiah 55.1-11**

**NT: Romans 6.1-11**

It's the 9<sup>th</sup> January and there's been plenty of time to make New Year resolutions and to break them! We set off with good intentions, wanting to better ourselves. Less alcohol, less meat, more exercise. (I can see members of the choir close to fainting at the thought!). Or we want to be more mindful of others and our planet. Less plastic use, less food waste, more recycling. Whatever you've opted for, I sincerely hope it's going well.

We make commitments without being able to know the full consequences, we can't possibly know them. But we carry on in good faith. For many of us who are baptised, commitments were made for us when we were babies. Even for those who were older when they made their own baptismal promises, when we set off to follow Jesus, we can have had little or no notion as to where that journey will lead us. Just reflect on your own experience, would you have thought years ago that you would find yourself sitting here this evening?

When Jesus opted for baptism from John, he knew exactly the path that he was taking, the commitment he was making. He knew that his journey would end in suffering and death and he prayed to the Father that it would go beyond the Crucifixion to the Resurrection.

This first public appearance for the man Jesus, was his commitment to a ministry of teaching, healing and challenging which would be cherished by many, bitterly resented by others and understood by no-one until after the coming of the Holy Spirit. Even John the Baptist could not have fully understood the consequences of his actions that day when he poured the water of the Jordan over his Master.

*And when Jesus had been baptised, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'*

Jesus's public ministry was endorsed by the power of the Holy Spirit and the love of the Father. Another sign that there was far more to this man, Jesus, than was initially apparent. Here in the gospel at this seminal moment, humanity is shown the Holy Trinity, three persons in one God. This is an important step in God taking back humanity into his eternal life.

This act of acceptance and salvation was reflected in our own baptism as Christ claimed us for our own and we were anointed with the sign of the cross and washed in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

If secular society sees the New Year as an opportunity to renew good intentions, then the Methodist church also sees such an opportunity as each year at this time it holds a Covenant service. A reminder of the promises that we made at our baptism, a reminder that we have committed ourselves to following Christ, no matter where that may lead, no matter how difficult we may find it, no matter our struggles and stumbles along the way.

The Covenant Prayer used at this service is beautiful and profound. It's not a prayer for the fainted hearted. It requires a commitment that can only be fulfilled with the help of God.

It is a potent reminder of our own insignificance But also our own worth in the sight of God.

It may be intended as an annual prompt to remember our calling as Christians but it is good to keep before us each day as we make our way more deeply into the kingdom of God and the life of the Trinity.

## The Methodist Covenant Prayer

*I am no longer my own but yours.*

*Put me to what you will,*

*rank me with whom you will;*

*put me to doing,*

*put me to suffering;*

*let me be employed for you,*

*or laid aside for you,*

*exalted for you,*

*or brought low for you;*

*let me be full,*

*let me be empty,*

*let me have all things,*

*let me have nothing:*

*I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things*

*to your pleasure and disposal.*

*And now, glorious and blessed God,*

*Father, Son and Holy Spirit,*

*you are mine and I am yours. So be it.*

*And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.'*

The Reverend Michelle Montrose