

9-15 January 2022 Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22

Re-sourced by God

Read the passage from Luke. It is written below.

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah,* John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with* the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved;* with you I am well pleased.'

Bible notes

When we picture John the Baptist, we understandably see him as something of a wild man. Some depictions dress him in animal skins and have him living off berries. As today's Gospel reading notes, he proclaimed a baptism of repentance. He invites his hearers to turn away from their self-centredness and re-centre on God. Such is his authority and passion that those who hear John think he might be the Messiah, and indeed – though this happens off camera – John is perceived to be such a threat that he is put to death.

If John is impressive, he tells the crowd that he is nothing in comparison to the one who is actually the Messiah: he will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire and sift the wheat from the chaff. Frankly, this sounds quite terrifying. The people may have repented – that is 'turned around' to face God – but what are they going to see? In what sense will the face before them – the face we know is Jesus – show them that they are loved?

This is a fear that faces the followers of Jesus in every age. However, we do not need to be terrified. When we dare to re-centre our lives on God, we discover that his fire purifies. This fire will not consume us, but will remove that which blocks us from the power of love. The chaff – the hard husk that protects growing wheat – will be swept away so that we can show forth the goodness at the heart of ourselves. It may be scary, but it is necessary if we are to offer our good hearts to the world.

Reflection

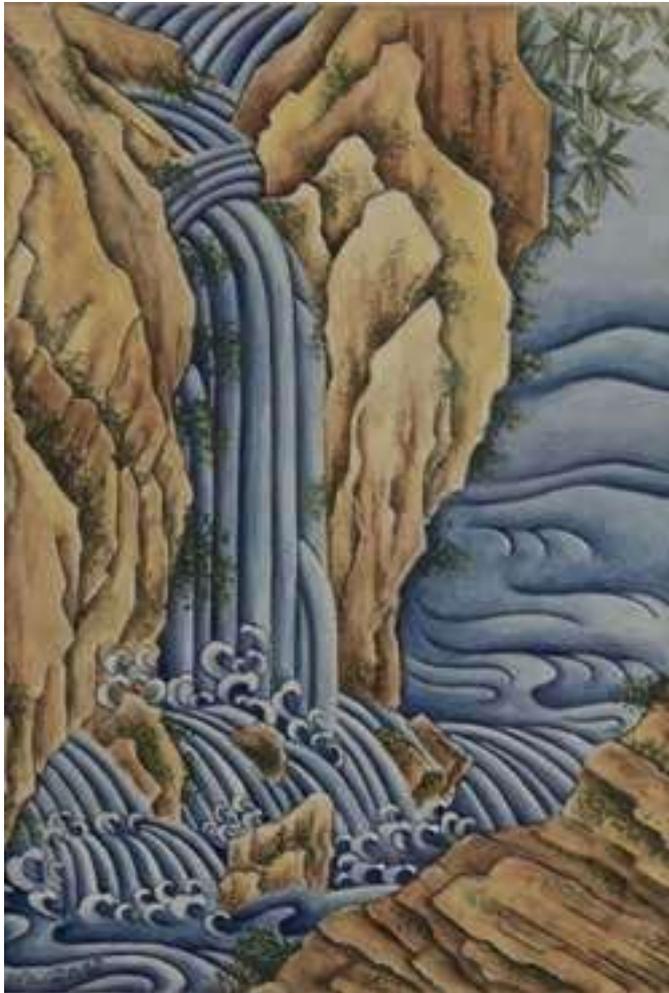
Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

Where do we get our inspiration from? What refreshes and restores us? What re-sources us?

At this time of year, we can feel low; it's dark inside and out. So, what keeps us going? Where do we draw our strength from? As Jesus made the decision to be baptized – something that was not required from him, but that he chose to do, perhaps in order to feel fully human – the Father let him know that he was his beloved Son, and with him he was well pleased. The warmth of the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus 'like a dove'. How does God affirm us? How does God present his Holy Spirit to us? Where do we see signs of God's Spirit at work in our lives?

Questions for reflection

You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues of sharing.



Questions

- When you are showered with positivity is that affirming or uncomfortable, or something else?
- What experiences do you have of feeling loved by God?
- What is it that resources and refreshes you?

A Prayer for our journey

Adapt to your local context.

Lord, you enfold us before we know it.
You know us by name long before we hear your call.
We belonged to you from the first;
the welcome was always waiting.
In astonished joy, we realise that we are beloved,
and we turn from our ways to yours.

Amen.

A prayer to end the Bible study

Holy Spirit, go with us into the world.
Re-source us with your power and your presence.
Father God, help us to know your love,
and that we are your beloved sons and daughters.
Lord Jesus Christ, help us to learn from you,
and to follow your example,
that we may share belovedness with everyone we meet.

Amen.