

Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God

Date: 16th January 2022
Services: *Across the diocese*
Series: As Luke begins
Title: ... that that Jesus was God's Son whom he loved
Passage: Luke 3:15-38
Outline:

1. Undoing sandals
2. Unpacking baptism
3. Rebranding bad news
4. Identifying Jesus

INTRODUCTION

- Well - Israel Folau's tweet has caused quite a stir this week hasn't it?
- It was **blunt**, it was **bold**, it was **insensitive**...
- It could have been **kinder**... more **caring**...
- It might have been said **better** and **clearer**...
- In fact it was probably better not said at all!
- but it was **true!** //
- and although most people saw it as anti-**gay**... and as targeting the homosexual community...
- ...it was actually **indiscriminate**... and its target **wide** enough to include **me**...
- **Drunks, homosexuals, adulterers, liars, fornicators, thieves, atheists, idolaters**...
- I qualify for **4** out of the **8** categories... that's $\frac{1}{2}$!
- I read a great piece of satire during the week written in response... purporting to be from a spokesperson from the **lying community** saying how upset they were that this tweet was **unsettling** lairs who were only just starting to **test** out their **lying capabilities**...
- But there's the thing: Israel Folau's comments are as **blunt** and **bold** and **insensitive** as John the **Baptist's** comments we explored last **week!**
- *"You brood of **vipers!** Who warned **you** to flee from the coming wrath? ... he starts his sermon as people come way out into the desert to hear what he has to say...*
- *"Produce **fruit** in keeping with **repentance**" he says... and then adds that if you're **not** showing in your life the radical nature of repentance - that is - turning your life from living for **self** to living for **God** - then - *The axe is already at the **root** of the **trees**, and every tree that does not produce **good** fruit will be cut down and thrown into the **fire**.**
- Now if John the Baptist were playing **rugby**, he'd have his **contract ripped up**...!
- He makes us feel **uncomfortable**...
- And we ask - why are such stark things **written** in the Bible??
- Why can't the Bible be **nicer? Softer? Gentler?** //
- These things are good indications that this is not **made up** don't you think? Because if you were making up a new religion to kind of piggy back on the back of Judaism... you wouldn't have your very first **preacher** be so **insensitive!** /

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- So as we take a second look at John the Baptist this morning and see the transition from the preparatory work of **John** to Jesus himself taking **up** his **ministry**, I want to explore with you four areas of this passage:

1. **Undoing sandals**
2. **Unpacking baptism**
3. **Rebranding bad news**
4. **Identifying Jesus**

- first

1. UNDOING SANDALS

- It was because John has spoken so **boldly** and with significant **authority** that you'll see in v15 – have a look with me – that people were wondering whether **John** might be the **Messiah**...
- You'll remember that people at the time were **looking** for him
- There had been **generations** of people waiting for the Messiah...
- A little bit like **we** wait for his **return**!
- People were saying – “do you think he'll come in our life time...”
- Any way – John caused such a **stir** – he drew such a **crowd** – and people were queuing up to be baptised by him that some were saying – **this must be him...!**
- In **John's** gospel we read that the religious leaders even sent a deputation down from Jerusalem to ask who he **was**...
- ...and he consistently said '**I am not the Messiah**'... I'm just a **voice** preparing the way
- And some who knew their Bibles may have remembered – ah yes – there **will** be one who comes **before** the Messiah to **prepare** the way
- Luke reports here **John's** perspective on where he fits in the scheme of things...
- ...and how **different** is this to people who like to talk themselves **up**... // perhaps that is **you** sometimes – or **has** been you – you portray yourself as being more **able** than you really are – more **important** – more **significant**... that's the way of the modern CV isn't it – to over-sell yourself? /
- Well John didn't play that game at all... he went the **opposite** way... he talks himself **down**...
- I'm only a **voice**... that's all..
- ..and the one who is to **come** – **way** more powerful than I and in fact – I am not worthy to untie his **sandals**...
- In the culture of the day – undoing someone's sandals is not usually something even the lowliest **servant** was asked to do... they would wash your feet... but actually untying the sandal... people would do for **themselves**...
- Do you see what John is saying...? I'm not even worthy to **start** at the point of the stuff slaves **won't do!** Undoing the Messiah's **sandals** – an honour too **great** for **John**...
- **John** gets the significance of the one who is to **come** – and his role in **preparing** the way....
- The one the religious leaders would **immediately** plot to kill, the one they would **spit** on, and **beat** up, and hung up to **die**... John said – *I'm not worthy even to untie his sandals*...
- The one whom **today** – people take his name in **vain**... and seek to banish him from being talked about **publicly** – whose **teaching** forms the fabric of our **laws** – but he must be banished from our

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schools... this one – this is the one whose sandals neither you or I am worthy to untie...!

- Do you hold Jesus in such high **esteem**? – by the way you **talk** about him – the way you **live** for **him** – **prioritise** him – **honour** him – **worship** him? //
- Well – that’s about untying sandals... / but I also want to talk about -

2. UNPACKING BAPTISM

- John elevates the Messiah not only by telling us he would be **unworthy** to untie his **sandals**... but also pointing out that the **Messiah’s** baptism, when he comes, will be of an entirely **different** order.
- Let’s have a look – v16 - *“I baptise you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire”*
- Now you remember that John’s baptism was **itself** an **insult** to **Jews**... though Jews in the end were lining up for it... but it was **insult** because **that** baptism had been for **Gentiles** who wanted to **identity** with **Jews**...
- As Luke had told us – it was a baptism of **repentance** for the **forgiveness** of sins...
- so when you turned from living a life where **you’re** in charge, to a life where **God** is in charge, the water baptism symbolised a **break** with the past and the new start marked by **forgiveness**...
- It was a **very significant** moment... and crowds **wanted** it, in **response** to John’s **preaching**.
- But **Jesus’** baptism... didn’t **involve** water.
- It involved the **Holy Spirit** and **fire**.
- Now that’s a strange thought for us because we so strongly associate baptism with water – whether it’s a **little** or a **lot**...
- But the word ‘**baptism**’ means to ‘dip’ or ‘immerse’ and can be used **metaphorically**... Jesus challenged James and John in Mark 10 when they asked sit at Jesus’ left and right in his kingdom... *can you be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with?* – in other words – can you be **immersed** – are you willing to be **immersed** into the **suffering** I will **suffer**...
- John says that **Jesus’** baptism will **immerse** people **with** or **into** the **Holy Spirit** and **fire**...
- That is, when you come into relationship with Jesus, he will **immerse** you with his **Holy Spirit** and with **fire** – to **change** you, **purify** you, **transform** you and **remake** you in his **image**... /
- What does this have to do with **water baptism today**?
- Simply – yet **profoundly** this – the two baptisms **merge** if you like, so that **water** baptism for **repentance** and **forgiveness**... is an **outward** sign of the **inward** baptism of the **Holy Spirit** and **fire**.
- **Water** baptism is an **external** expression of an **inward** reality.
- Sometimes people will ask me if I’ve been baptised with the **Holy Spirit**. I will always answer ‘**yes**’ for it would not be possible for me to call Jesus ‘**Lord**’ and live **one** day for him if I had **not**!! //
- **All** true and real believers in the Lord Jesus – who have come into a relationship of **love** and **service** and **trust**, and now **live** for **him** – have been baptised with the **Holy Spirit** and **fire** – and the **Holy Spirit** and **fire** are **daily** working in the life of the believer to continually **purify** and **refine**... and **strengthen to be about God’s work**!
- But let me say this – if you are a **new** Christian but have not **yet been** baptised... then we should talk... so that we can share **together** in the **outward** and **visible sign** of God’s **inward** and **invisible** grace...

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- ...but that leads me to a question for you...

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- Because John goes on in v17 – have a look – to say that the Messiah’s *winnowing* fork is in his hand to clear his *threshing* floor and to gather up the *wheat* into his *barn*, but he will burn up the *chaff* with the *unquenchable fire*...
- True believers he will gather to himself... while people **without** repentance – will be **gone**....
- Now that doesn’t sound very **nice** – but note the next verse – **v18** – and with many *other* words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the **good news** to them...
- so why is this stuff about chaff and fire called **GOOD NEWS?** – so my **third** point – what is this...

3. REBRANDING BAD NEWS?

- How can he say the Messiah is about gathering **wheat** into his **barn** but throwing **chaff** into a **fire** and say he was proclaiming **good news**?
- the same point made back in v9 where the axe he says is poised, and **fruitless** trees cut down and thrown into the **fire**.
- We want to say ‘**stop it John**’ – you’re not doing the cause any **good** with such **negative** talk! //
- Many of us grew up in the church which seemed to be based on scaring the **hell** out of **people** – where people turned up to **church** and tried their best to do a bucket full of **good** things, scared stiff that if they **didn’t**, they’d go to **hell**...
- Surely we’re **over** that...
- Well – I think we **are**... and if you grew going to church and doing good **only** because you were scared **stiff** of doing anything **else** – I’m so **sorry**... that’s a **terrible** way to **live**!
- You know what I call **that**?
- **Religion**.
- And **religion** has a lot to answer for.
- So, let me ask you this:
- Are **warning** signs, **bad** news or **good** news?
- “don’t swim outside the flags” ... **bad** news or **good** news?
- **Steep cliff ahead** – **bad** news or **good** news?
- Caution **sharks** – **bad** news or **good** news?
- Probably depends a little on whether you’re a glass **half-empty** or a ‘glass **half-full**’ type of person!
- You could say – Oh darn – I can’t **swim** here – or you could say ‘thank **goodness** I was **warned**!’
- You could say – **darn** – I wanted to get closer to the cliff so I can see the **view** – or ‘wow – look at the view from **here** – where I’m **safe**’
- And what if told you that in each case I’d left something **off** the sign...
- Don’t swim outside the flags... **patrolled beach 200m south**
- Steep cliff ahead – **fenced lookout 50m**
- Caution **sharks** – shark nets – **150m**
- You can probably see where I’m **going**...
- John the Baptist says – you **bunch** of **snakes**... but then tells people what repentance looks like – and baptises those who repent as a sign of their forgiveness...

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- The Messiah has a **winnowing** fork... yes... but for those who repent, he has a baptism of the **Holy Spirit and of fire!**
- The **good** news only makes sense on the back of the **bad** news! You can't remove **judgement** when you preach the **good news!**
- Israel Falou says all these people are going to **hell** – but wait there's **more** – if you **repent** – Jesus **saves!!**
- ... and **that** friends, is **good** news – **great** news!!
- It is not so much that Luke has **rebranded** bad news as **good** news... / it is that Luke sees the **bad** news as the necessary **background** to the good news – the **glorious** news that for those who **repent**, there is full and free **forgiveness** through the **Lord Jesus!**
- I want to ask you **again** this morning – **have you repented?**
- Have you **responded** to the good news... the good news which consists both in the **warning** and the wonderful **solution**... the warning that pushing God out won't end **well**... but the wonderful **solution** that if and when you **stop** pushing God out and turn to him **surrender** and **trust** – **forgiveness** will be **yours!!**
- Well **finally** – and I fear, all too **briefly**...

4. IDENTIFYING JESUS

- If John's baptism was a baptism marking out both **repentance** and **forgiveness**, why on earth was Jesus standing in **line** for this?
- Presumably John had baptised a **few** that day... and Jesus is **next** in line... v21 – it could hardly be more brief if Luke tried... *Jesus was baptised too!*
- **John's gospel** doesn't specifically **tell** us he was baptised, Mark is as **brief** as **Luke** and **Matthew** tells us that John tried to **deter** Jesus so that **he** might be baptised by **him!**
- We did touch on this a couple of weeks ago when we looked at Jesus undergoing the purification rites in the temple... do you we **recall?**
- We said then that it was part of Jesus' **identifying** with us...
- He came to enter our **world**... our **experience** – our **life**... to come along **side** us at every point... and so he **identifies** with us through his **baptism**... ***I'm standing with you! //***
- But **Luke's** emphasis here is not on him **identifying WITH** us, but on **identifying Jesus** as God's **Son**...
- v21b – have a look with me – *And as [Jesus] was praying, the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased".*
- Remember what Luke wrote as he began? He's put this together so we can **certain** about Jesus
- You can be **certain** that in terms of something you could **see** that day – AND **hear** that day – that Jesus was **publicly** and **powerfully** identified as God's **Son**.
- He was **unlike** all the others who had lined up for baptism that day...
- as the thief later on the cross would say '*this man has done nothing wrong*'
- what have we seen in our Luke series since the start of Feb?
- The angel to Zechariah – that John would prepare people for the **Lord**
- The angel to Mary – that the son conceived in her miraculously would be the **Son** of the **Most high**

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- **Elizabeth** – filled with the Holy Spirit confirms Mary as the mother of her **Lord**
- **Mary** in her song – that in Jesus – God’s promises way back to **Abraham** were being fulfilled
- **Zechariah** in his song – that the birth of John, marked God stepping in to **redeem his people**
- Then **Simeon** in his song – holding the boy **Jesus** – my eyes have seen your **salvation...**
- And now – in case there was **any** doubt so far... the descended **dove** and the **voice** as clear as crystal... **this is my Son...**
- ...wonderfully then affirmed in the genealogy that unfolds... ending as it does in **v 38 – the son of Seth, the Son of Adam, the Son of God...**
- **Luke** wants you to know this morning... that the **man Jesus Christ** is **God the Son...**
- not just for your **information** so you can say – my – that’s very interesting **Mark**, thanks for pointing that out...
- but for your **transformation** – that you might **bow** before him... and **worship** and **adore** him – and **live** for him and that your **transformed life** may point **others** to **him** and to the **forgiveness** he holds out to **everyone...**!

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- Jesus’ **sandals**? Unworthy to **untie** – does your whole life bow before him?
 - Jesus’ **baptism**? With the **Holy Spirit and fire** – allow the **HS** and his **fire...** to **continue to transform** you!
 - **Bad** news or **good** news? The **good** news only makes sense on the back of the **bad** news... have you **so** understood the **bad** news... that you have **run** to and taken **hold** of the **good** news?
 - **Identifying** Jesus? – Jesus who identified with us through and through... and Jesus who on this **amazing day** – was clearly **identified** to us as God’s **Son** whom he **loved...** lest you be in any **doubt** this **morning...** and so you **embrace** him and **love** him and **live** for him... all the **more!**