

Sunday January 14th

Baptism of Jesus



Readings

Acts 19 verses 1 – 7

Mark 1 verses 1 – 11

May the God of new beginnings
give you courage to face each new challenge,
joy in each new day,
and friends to journey with you through this new week.
Amen.

The whole world changed Mark 1.4-11

This passage is the first appearance of Jesus as an adult and comes at the beginning of his ministry. His baptism is a new beginning and a transformation. John the baptiser says that he is not worthy to untie Jesus' shoes. He recognises that Jesus will be able to do much greater things by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This reading is given alongside the account of the beginning of everything from the opening chapter of Genesis, and a story about the Holy Spirit and new beginnings from Acts. Our new beginnings come through the forgiveness God offers, which is not just the once in a lifetime event of our baptism, but all the forward-looking opportunities that God offers us each and every day.

This week we explore the opportunity for a new beginning that comes with Jesus.

John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness.*

He was a strange-looking man, clothed in a hairy camel skin, with a leather belt around his waist. And he ate strange things: locusts and wild honey.

John was announcing a message of forgiveness of sins if people repented* and were baptized. People came from all over to be baptized by John in the River Jordan. They came from the city of Jerusalem and from the countryside all around.

John shouted loudly, 'Someone else is coming. Someone more powerful than me. I am not important enough even to untie his shoes!' John said that although he baptized people with water, the one who was coming would be different. He would baptize people with the Holy Spirit.

Then one day he came. Jesus came from Nazareth to the River Jordan, to be baptized by John. And as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were torn apart and a dove came down; the Holy Spirit descended onto Jesus. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son. I love you and I am pleased with you.*' **Mark 1.4-11**



Remind the children that John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin.

Explain that repent means saying sorry to God for what you have done; having a change of heart. At the end, look at a picture or photo of a modern baptism if you have one and discuss the differences between baptism today and what happened to Jesus.

Mark announces his Gospel as 'The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God' (v.1). He sets the scene for transformation by telling the story of John the Baptist, who fulfils Isaiah's prophecy and makes the preparations. These are impressive in themselves. Mark describes crowds of people thronging from all directions to find John in the desert and seek his baptism. But this is only the prologue. John's ministry reaches its climax with the announcement of the one who will baptize with water and the Holy Spirit – and then Jesus appears.

The whole passage centres on new beginnings. The first sentence of the Gospel spells out the way in which the world is entirely changed, now that Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, is present. Mark goes on to describe the ways in which this new life is made real. People are offered the opportunity for a fresh start. The Greek word usually translated 'repentance' (v.4) carries the sense of 'a change of mind' or 'a change of heart'. It relates far more to the promise of a new future than to mulling over the sins of the past. But this is only stage one of the new life into which God invites us.

The baptism of Jesus is also a moment of new beginning. Though there is nothing for Jesus to repent of (see Matthew 3.14), this is a new stage in his life too, as he moves away from the hidden years in Nazareth and begins his active ministry. At his baptism, God does something amazing. People of Jesus' time tended to imagine a rigid, unbreakable barrier dividing earth and heaven, one that made it impossible for humanity to reach God. Now this barrier is torn apart (v.10) and God's Spirit comes powering through, like a descending dove. The world is indeed changed and those who experience Jesus' baptism in the Spirit will begin to discover what that means.

*****Activities*****

Play with bubbles

Explore the difference water can make

You will need: a beaker for each child; water, washing-up liquid, straws, a towel.

- Half fill each beaker with water. Offer everyone a beaker and add a squirt of washing-up liquid.
- Invite the children to describe what they can see in their beaker. Now give each child a straw and invite them to blow into the mixture.
- Discuss what changes the air has made to the mixture. Remind the group that everything changed for Jesus when he was baptized.

Create a story card reminder

Illustrate the main characters

You will need: copies of the [template \(on separate page\)](#) , one per child, pens or pencils.

- Help the children to cut out the template and fold to make doors that open. Talk together about the story as a new beginning for Jesus, like a door opening or a new chapter.
- Ask the children to draw on the outside of their door: John the Baptist on one side, and a crowd of people on the other.
- Invite the children to open their door and draw the scene of Jesus coming up out of the river in the centre, with the dove above him inside the top semi-circle.

Talk together and talk to God

Use these questions to discuss the Bible passage and then bring your thoughts together by praying to God.

Talk together

- What does it feel like when you start something new?
- How do you think Jesus felt about his new beginning which started with this story?
- What new beginnings might you ask God to help you with?

Talk to God: Watch for the transformation

Reflect on the change that can come with water

You will need: SmartiesTM, a large plate with a rim, water.

- Invite the children to suggest things in their lives that need God's help to change. Add a sweet to the plate for each suggestion, spacing them apart as much as possible.
- When all the suggestions have been made, invite everyone to pray silently as you add water to the plate. Encourage the children to keep silent as the colours slowly start to dissolve to create a beautiful pattern. Point out the change that has taken place on the plate, and give thanks for the way God's love can transform us.

Discuss the need for new beginnings

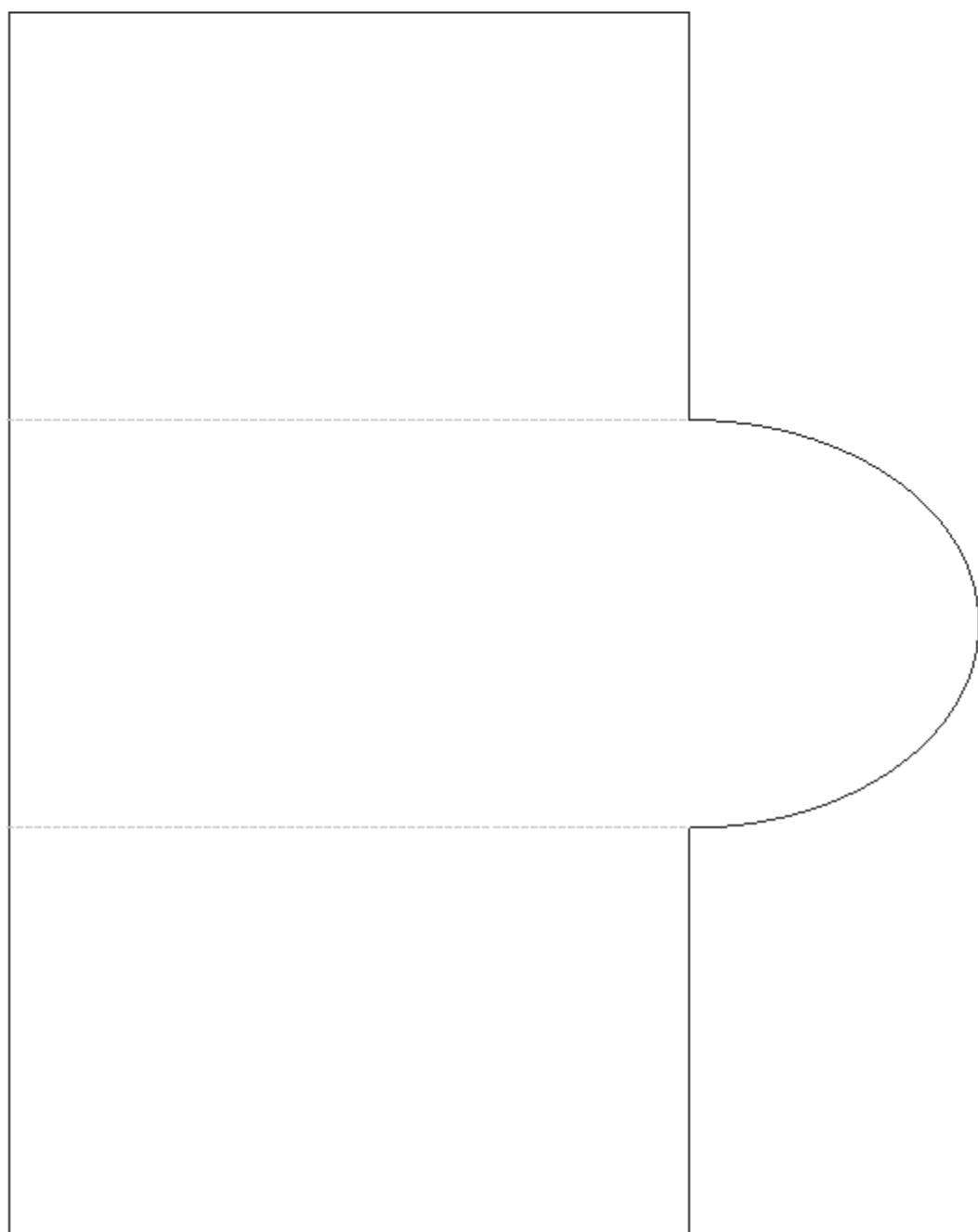
An opportunity to reflect on world issues

You will need: a large sheet of paper, marker pen.

Reminder that John told the people who came to see him that they needed to repent, to have a change of heart and to behave differently.

Suggest things in the world where people need to repent and change their behaviour, e.g. climate change, bullying, poverty.

Invite ideas for making a difference in the local area. Make a plan for something achievable and practical that will help to right a wrong, or encourage others to behave differently.





The Baptism of Jesus

The Baptism of Jesus

As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Mark 1:10-11

Based on Mark 1:4-11 (NIV)



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X Q A E T H J Y K D A L F S J
V N P A N W T M R K A V F C Z
H E W P J I J L M N R N E C W
R Q O S N Q J O O C O Z D N Y
C O N F E S S C L L J T Z D E
Y J S J O H N U W O H O N E Y
J F E I A H I S X T N E P P R
I P G S N B T T Z H H M G E D
Q F I B U S I S Z I W H V L I
B P E O Z S F N D N T I I P N
Z Y S P I R I T D G R W U U T

REPENT
CLOTHING
LOCUSTS
SPIRIT

JORDAN
SINS
WATER
CONFESS

FORGIVE
JESUS
RIVER
HONEY

HEAVEN
WILD
BAPTIZED
JOHN