

## **Sermon 20<sup>th</sup> July 2025 (5<sup>th</sup> after Trinity)**

### **Baptism of Victoria (age 10 and 4 months)**

#### **Colossians 1.15–28**

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; <sup>16</sup>for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. <sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup>and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

21 And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup>he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him—<sup>23</sup>provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.

24 I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. <sup>25</sup>I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, <sup>26</sup>the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. <sup>27</sup>To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup>It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

#### **Luke 10.38–end**

38 Jesus entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. <sup>39</sup>She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. <sup>40</sup>But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' <sup>41</sup>But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; <sup>42</sup>there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'

May I speak in the name of God, the Father the Son and the Holy spirit. **Amen**

Today after this talk there will be a baptism, and this is a special occasion not only for Victoria who is being baptised, but also for us at Great St Mary's as we don't have baptisms that often because ours is a very small parish in terms of resident population. It is likely that most of here will have been baptised, largely as infants. For Christians baptism is a profound and sacred time of transition, I wonder how often we reflect on what our own baptism means to us now? So I'm going to remind us of the immensity of what happened at our baptism, and seeing as it's her baptism today, I'll address these words to Victoria.... and I'm going to do that in the form of a letter.

Dear Victoria, how wonderful it is that you have chosen to become baptised today and now you can be welcomed into the huge world-wide family of Christian people. This is an important first step in a lifetime's journey, so I thought I would offer some ideas about baptism for you to re-visit over the years ahead.

Jesus' baptism showed his followers two things: first, the importance of beginning a new life, something which we call repentance; and second, that at baptism we welcome into our lives something very special, the Holy Spirit. For Jesus this appeared like a dove coming from heaven.

So, first we take on a new life, and second, we open ourselves to God's help and protection from the Holy Spirit. The story about two sisters, Mary and Martha, whom Jesus loved and visited at their home, can help remind us about these two stages of baptism.

First, there's Martha, who met Jesus at the door and welcomed him in. She was keen to serve him and make sure everyone was alright, she was busy in the kitchen, whilst the others, including Mary, settled at Jesus' feet to hear what he had to say.

Martha puts the needs of others above her own. She works hard so that everyone else, comfortable and refreshed, can listen to Jesus. Martha shows us the first stage of baptism when we decide to dedicate our lives to making sure the world around us is thriving. We "Love our Neighbour", by being generous, or kind, or standing up for people or animals who are unfairly treated, or by caring for the environment.

We also make a decision to not cause harm to anyone or anything in creation, and if we do, then we say sorry straight away. This is what is meant by the "turning away from sin" and "rejecting evil" that you will hear in the words of the baptism service.

We symbolise this first change of direction by marking you with the sign of the cross, the sign of Jesus, and baptising you with water, which cleanses and makes things like new.

But Martha, is grumpy. She knows her work is important, but no-one helps her, so she asks Jesus to sort this out. But to her surprise, instead of getting everyone to help, Jesus focuses on Martha, and her worry. Caring for others is good, but if it makes us miserable then something has gone wrong. He points to Mary to show what is needed.

Mary focuses on Jesus, sits at his feet, listens to his words. When Mary looks at Jesus, because he is a person like her, and a friend, she is looking at God in a way that she can trust and understand.

Mary reminds us that to look towards Jesus, to try to be like him, is to begin to understand God and God's ways. Turning towards Jesus is the second stage of baptism, and for this we need supernatural help. We need God in the form of the Holy Spirit to help us. When the Holy Spirit is welcomed into our lives, it begins a life-long work of opening our hearts so that we can love God, and all creation, and share this love with others. We symbolise the arrival of the Holy Spirit by giving you a lit candle at the end of the service.

So Victoria, now is the time for your baptism, and I will close this letter with a prayer. And may we all make this a prayer for ourselves also.

On this, the day of your baptism  
May you be blessed throughout your Christian life  
with the kindness and care of Martha,  
and the joy and love of Mary,  
and so may you ever be a blessing to others and all creation. Amen.