



Call: Jesus said: “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened.” So let us come to him now with the weariness of the return to everyday life, and the burdens of the year ahead. Let us put them and us in his strong arms, so that he can lower us into the waters and raise us, cleansed and refreshed.

Prayer: We come to worship, because we are each called and chosen. We come because of God’s power, love and devotion to each one of us. We come to share the blessings of God and to receive more. We come humbly before the God who created the world, who gave us Jesus, who poured out the Holy Spirit upon us. Humbly we come before you, O Lord. AMEN`

Hymn: STF 440 Amazing Grace <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYMLMj-SibU> II Divo version

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tvt6E9N7AQw>

Amazing grace-how sweet the sound-
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

God's grace has taught my heart to fear,
his grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

And, when this heart and flesh shall fail
and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil
a life of joy and peace.

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
God's grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we first begun.

John Newton (1725-1807) Used By Permission. CCL Licence No. 1085607

Prayer: As we enter the period of Epiphany, we praise you for your revelation through Jesus Christ, incarnate Messiah. We bring our praise and adoration just as the Magi bowed down and worshipped you. Yet yours is the voice speaking to us through the storms of life and guiding us through rough waters we face. You bring strength in our weakness and bless us with your peace. Your Holy Spirit is poured out for us, and kindled in our hearts. We praise you that you walk with us on every step we take. Yours is the power and glory, majesty above all things. Your love is everlasting and freely given. We bring you our praise and adoration, O Lord. AMEN

Almighty and eternal God, we have walked journey we should not have walked; done things we should not have done; said words that should not have been spoken. We have ignored your gifts of the Spirit, seeking to quench it rather than be cleansed by it. We have been silent as a dark night when we should have been like a crackling fire bringing comfort, warmth and reassurance. Forgive us, we pray and kindle your flame within us. Accept our repentance and send us on our forgiven way, walking with God’s Spirit within us. AMEN

Hymn: STF 397 The Spirit lives to set us free Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDcbYk-9C-Y>

The Spirit lives to set us free,
walk, walk in the light.
He binds us all in unity,
walk, walk in the light.

Jesus promised life to all,
walk, walk in the light.
The dead were wakened by his call,
walk, walk in the light.

*Walk in the light, walk in the light,
walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord*

Chorus

He died in pain on Calvary,
walk, walk in the light,
to save the lost like you and me,
walk, walk in the light.
Chorus

By Jesus' love our wounds are healed,
walk, walk in the light.
The Father's kindness is revealed,
walk, walk in the light.
Chorus

We know his death was not the end,
walk, walk in the light.
He gave his Spirit to be our friend,
walk, walk in the light.
Chorus

The Spirit lives in you and me,
walk, walk in the light.
His light will shine for all to see,
walk, walk in the light.
Chorus

Damian Lundy (1940-1997) © 1978 Kevin Mayhew Ltd Used By Permission. CCL Licence No. 1085607

Readings: Isaiah 43: 1-7 and Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22

Hymn: STF 373 – Come Holy Ghost Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjKcc8IcxIo>

Come Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
and lighten with celestial fire;
thou the anointing Spirit art,
who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart.

keep far our foes, give peace at home;
where thou art guide no ill can come.

Thy blessèd unction from above
is comfort, life, and fire of love;
enable with perpetual light
the dullness of our blinded sight.

Teach us to know the Father, Son,
and thee, of both to be but One;
that through the ages all along
this may be our endless song,

Anoint and cheer our soilèd face
with the abundance of thy grace:

'Praise to thy eternal merit,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.'

Veni, creator Spiritus attributed to Rabanus Maurus (c776-856), John Cosin (1594-1672) Used By Permission. CCL Licence No. 1085607

Message: “Coming safely through the waters”

Recent weather events have meant that areas of the world, and even here in the UK have been subject to devastating floods as a result of increased rainfall and heavy winds. In fact, I was reminded that 20 years ago on Boxing Day the world suffered its worse flood in modern times with the devastating tsunami on Boxing Day. Thankfully I have never been caught in major flooding. However, we do have a ford on our road in towards Ipswich, and when it's been raining heavily the run-off from the fields causes the ford to become unpassable and means having to find a different route, something even preachers on a Sunday have been caught out with! (We do try and remember to let preachers know in advance of any route disruption.) Fortunately, it is very rare for someone to attempt to drive their vehicle through the flooded ford and then get caught out.

Both our bible readings today are concerned with water, and travelling safely through it.

Isaiah speaks of God as being Israel's only Saviour, bringing them safely through water and through fire. His message of a Creator God, who redeems them and protects them is repeated by Jesus' action of baptism by John, and is equally relevant for us today.

Isaiah was prophesying to the Jewish nation exiled in Babylon. These people were chosen by God. He had formed them, he had named them Israel, when Jacob had been transformed from a cunning deceiver – cheating his older brother Esau out of his inheritance, to one who wrestles with God and overcomes. God was promising the people of Israel he would redeem them, and he would protect them. God would bring them safely out of exile through waters and through fire.

God **created**, he **redeemed** and he **protected**.

As we enter this period of Epiphany, when we consider the revelation of God through the incarnation of Jesus, we can reflect on how God uses these three words through the baptism of Jesus.

Jesus is thought to be about 30 years old. All we know of him up to this point is that he was born in Bethlehem in less than ideal surroundings, he had to spend some time as a refugee in Egypt, and at the age of 12 quizzed the preachers and teachers in the temple. Some 18 years later, he appears on the scene again, a moment significant enough to be recorded.

This was the moment that Jesus' ministry would truly begin. And to mark that moment, Jesus would receive baptism through the wilderness prophet, John. This was certainly a moment to be noted and remembered. Jesus was God's Son. He was perfect, he was without sin, and so would have no need of John's baptism of repentance and forgiveness, yet he is publicly baptised in the river Jordan, and as he comes out of the water, "the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. A voice came from heaven saying "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Jesus, God's Son. God **created** and loved Jesus. Luke's recording of this short speech is very personal, it's intimate. "YOU are my Son." It is one to one. "You are the Messiah, my chosen One; with you I am well pleased."

Why was God well pleased? God knew, and Jesus knew, that he would fulfil God's purpose, just as had been prophesied in Isaiah 42. "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations." Jesus would **redeem** the world, not through the acts of a mighty warrior king, nor through political manoeuvres. He would redeem the world as a servant king, one who was born in a stable and who lived and moved amongst the marginalised and downtrodden. Jesus would fulfil God's will by suffering and taking the way of the cross. It was through this final great sacrificial act that Jesus would bring about the **protection** that Isaiah had prophesied to the people of Israel, yet this was to be for all people. By dying on the cross Jesus paid for all our sin.

How do we see God's **creation**, **redemption** and **protection** in our lives?

Through Jesus and the New Testament Good News, we know that God not only **created** and chose the Jewish nation, but all people. Isaiah prophesied that God will join all people from north and south, east and west. Jesus came for all people, you and me. He made us all in his image and he knows us all by name.

When Jesus came to earth in human form he came to identify with humankind. He didn't seek out the kings in royal robes, or religious leaders in their finery, he came to ordinary people living in the wilderness. Jesus was baptised, not because he needed to, rather because we need to. Jesus came to identify with all humanity and its sinfulness.

When I was baptised as a child, my parents chose to do this to acknowledge that Jesus died for me, so that I could be **redeemed**. Jesus died for us all, and when he comes again, he will gather the whole of humankind wherever we are from.

We see baptism as one of the sacraments of Christianity, a sign or recognition of that divine grace brought about by Jesus.

Jesus was baptised and the Holy Spirit came upon him. When we commit ourselves to Christ, then we allow the Holy Spirit to work through us.

We hopefully do not have to face deep flood waters or anything like a tsunami, however there will be times when we are faced with the deep flood waters of life. If we try and face these in our own strength then we might drown, but if we allow Jesus to work through us, we will still have to face the flood waters but we can be assured that we will come through them stronger through the power of the Holy Spirit.

When we are faced with life's struggles we can remember, it is God who has **created** us and knows us, Jesus who has **redeemed** us and the Holy Spirit who strengthens and **protects** us. AMEN

Hymn: STF 395 Spirit of the living God - Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06h3J5FYn-I>

Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me;
Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me;

melt me, mould me, fill me, use me.
Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me;

Prayers: Let us pray to God who calls us each by name.

As Jesus was baptised in the river Jordan we pray for your church and Christians everywhere who have made promises and commitments to you. May we be faithful to those promises, may church leaders be faithful in their service to the church and the people it serves. May lay workers and volunteers work together with leaders to witness your love within the local community.

Come Holy Spirit, **fill our lives**

We pray for peace and integrity in all our dealings as individuals, and in local, national and international areas of conflict; for an openness to hear God's wisdom and courage to follow his lead. We pray that 2025 brings peace to Ukraine and the Middle East, a new beginning for the people of Syria, and an awakening and further commitment to reversing the damage done through climate change.

Come Holy Spirit, **fill our lives**

We pray for harmony and understanding in our relationships with family and neighbours; for the willingness to both give and to receive, for the generosity of forgiving love.

Come Holy Spirit, **fill our lives**

We pray for those whose weariness or pain makes it difficult to pray; may they sense the support and love of friends and family.

Come Holy Spirit, **fill our lives**

We give thanks that you have called us each by name, keeping us safe through the storms and difficulties of this life, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Merciful Father accept these prayers in the name of your chosen Son Jesus Christ. AMEN

LORDS PRAYER – *Our Father, who art in heaven*

Hymn: STF 495 Dear Lord and Father of mankind <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1MN3chW1Hk&t=78s>

(verses 1,2,5,6 on recording)

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways;
Reclothe us in our rightful mind;
In purer lives thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.

With that deep hush subduing all
Our words and works that drown
The tender whisper of thy call,
As noiseless let thy blessing fall
As fell thy manna down.

In simple trust like theirs who heard
Beside the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word
Rise up and follow thee.

Drop thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of thy peace.

O sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with thee
The silence of eternity,
Interpreted by love!

Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still small voice of calm!

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892) Used By Permission. CCL Licence No. 1085607

Blessing: Eternal God, you have given us new life through baptism and the Holy Spirit. We dedicate ourselves once again to you, and pray that we may walk in the Spirit that sets us free and face whatever stormy waters we encounter, knowing that you are with us, supporting and guiding us. AMEN