

**Third Sunday of Epiphany,
Sunday, 23rd January 2022**



Dear Friends,

***‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.’***

(Luke 4: 18)

In the Benefice office this week, Caroline and I were discussing the exigencies of grammar. I had become incensed by a media article which reported Prince Harry as having ‘pled’ for additional security when he visits the UK. Pled indeed! In our conversation, Caroline embellished a point she was making with the words etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.... Her repetition of these three words lifted me from being a paid up, grumpy member of the Grammar Police into a reverie of Hollywood at its zenith. For those of a certain age, I feel sure you too will be transported to Siam and a vision of the incomparable Yul Brynner in the Rodgers and Hammerstein film, *‘The King and I.’*



Yul Brynner in ‘The King and I’ Source: Alamy

Brynner plays the role of King Mongkut of Siam, a proud ruler bound by the rigidities of the station for which he was destined by birth. In contrast, Prince Harry appears reluctant to loose the ties of his royal blood.

Chapter 4 of Luke's Gospel gives us an account of Jesus at His local synagogue in Nazareth, quoting from Chapter 61: 1 of the Book of Isaiah: *'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.'* Isaiah prophesies deliverance for the people of Israel, though not from their exile in Babylon, but in a future age. It is Jesus who is called by name at His baptism to deliver us all. His death and resurrection save us from ourselves; we who are the 'poor' who will know the grace of New Life if we but choose to receive the gift of salvation He freely offers to each of us by name.



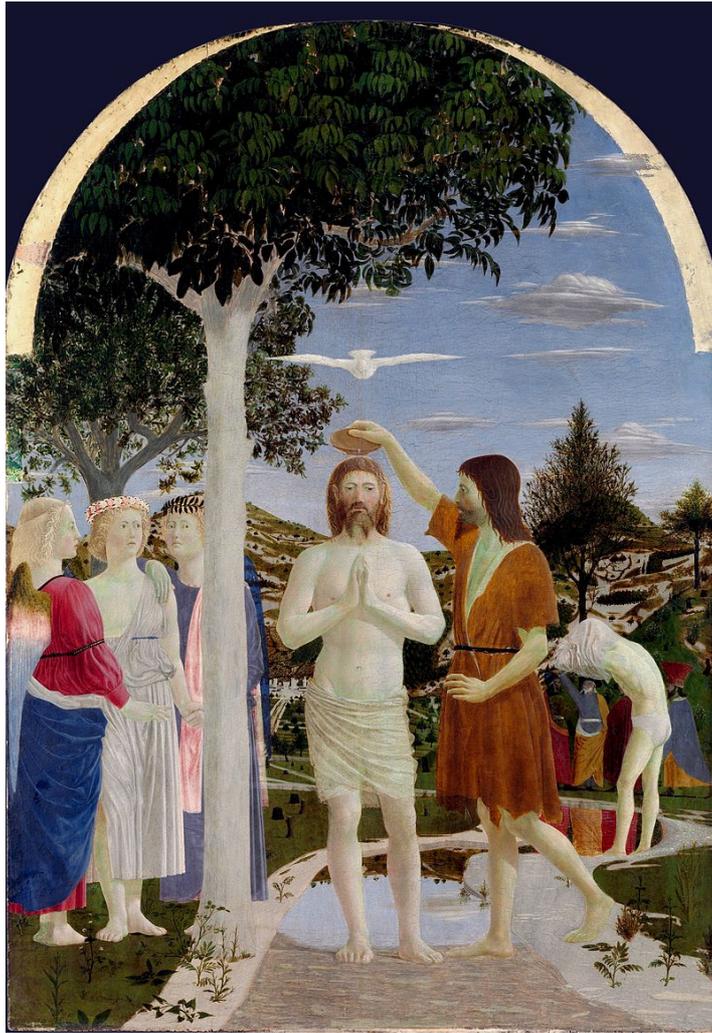
'Luke 4: 14-21' by Joe Watkins

Luke places this story of homecoming and rejection as Jesus begins His ministry in Galilee, after recounting the rollercoaster events of His uplifting baptism and subsequent harrowing temptations by the devil; interspersing these tumultuous situations with a long list of Jesus' ancestors, dating right back to Adam. Unequivocally, Luke shows his readers that Jesus is related to every human being and is called by God in to this divine missional work, who tells us at His Baptism *'This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased.'*

During Epiphany-tide, Luke's account prepares us, at the outset of Jesus' ministry, for the unwillingness of people (even in His home-town) to accept Jesus as the Son of God, and helps us see the inevitability of His eventual crucifixion. It gives us glimpses of the wideness and depth of Jesus' love for us and the extent to which our Saviour is prepared to go to reunite us with God.

As Lutheran priest and theologian, Guntars Baikovs writes:

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news ...' God was on His mission in Jesus. The words spoken through Isaiah the prophet had come alive. Jesus from Nazareth, conceived by the Holy Spirit, was anointed by the Holy Spirit.'



'The Baptism of Christ' by Piero della Francesca

This week, I am delighted to bring you an Epiphany reflection penned by Sally Wesley, a member of our Ministry Team from Sparsholt. Sally's thought-provoking focus is on the impact of our names. A few years back, I refused to baptise twin babies with the names Horror and Disaster. Whilst amusing to the parents, I cannot imagine the negative impact those children would have suffered as they grew up. Thankfully, the parents capitulated and the unsuspecting babies were baptised with joyful Christian names.

Yours, saved by faith in Christ,

Jax
Rector, The Downs Benefice

Reflection for Epiphany on Proverbs 22: 1-6 – Sally Wesley, BCM

Our reading from Proverbs starts with the line: *'A good name is more desirable than great riches'* and my Reflection today is based on giving people names or labels.

Though Jesus was not baptised as a baby, he was circumcised eight days after his birth, as was Jewish custom. Male babies were given their name at their circumcision. So this forms the Naming Ceremony for Jewish boys. Girls would normally be named at the first Torah reading after their birth.

Thirty years ago, my son was christened in St. Stephen's, Sparsholt, when he was 3 months old. At that time, I was confused by my father-in-law referring to it as a baptism. Even though the words 'baptism' and 'christening' are used interchangeably, there is a subtle difference. Christening refers to the naming ceremony (to 'christen' means to 'give a name to') whereas Baptism is one of the sacraments in the Anglican Church. In the sacrament of Baptism, the baby's name is used and mentioned, however it is the rite of claiming the child for Christ and his Church which is celebrated.

One of the major tasks in having a baby is selecting the right name. Parents recognise that a child's name becomes part of their identity. We didn't know the gender of our children before birth, so decided on names we liked as well as being family names.

However, a parent's duty to give their child a good name does not end when it is printed on a birth certificate or given at a christening. The act of giving your child a good name continues throughout their upbringing and these names will be just as important.

We use words to label, define and compare as we use them to describe ourselves and the people around us. Have you ever stopped to think how the words we use to define others might affect how we treat them or how they feel about themselves? Children soak up what they hear about themselves. They pick up every word we throw out to describe them. What words do you use to define your children or grandchildren?

*Train up a child in
the way they should go,
and when they grow old,
they will not depart from it.*

Proverbs 22:6

Often, we may use words that have negative emotional associations to describe behaviour we don't like, such as being stubborn. Take a minute and think about a child described as stubborn – what comes to mind? Maybe you think of a child having a tantrum in the supermarket, because they won't do what their parents want. But if you take away that pre-conceived idea of what stubborn looks like, you remember a child's behaviour can mean many different things. Stubborn can mean persistent, tenacious or determined.

The same word could just as easily be used to describe the child who refuses to give into peer pressure, or one who refuses to quit even if when struggling with spelling or times tables in school. How quickly our emotional feelings shift when we move from describing a child as determined instead of stubborn.

I am very proud of both my offspring but my sister has drummed into me that one shouldn't always go on about one's children's amazing exploits or good characteristics. To avoid this, I have been known to describe our son as 'arrogant', a negative trait. But I am trying to change that: he is not arrogant, but self-confident; being an Army Officer, he has to demonstrate leadership, integrity, resourcefulness, initiative and an ability to take decisions under pressure. His Guardsmen would not appreciate their Senior Officer being diffident. I now view him much more positively and treat him better as a result.

I thought I would look at some of the 'labels' in our Proverbs reading. Let's start with 'Prudent' (Verse 3): *'The prudent see danger and take refuge.'* The adjective, 'Prudent' can seem sensible, possibly boring - not prepared to take risks or be adventurous. However, the real meaning of Prudent is *'acting with or showing care and thought for the future.'* Prudence is the exercise of restraint guided by sound practical wisdom and discretion, so a good quality to have!



'The Allegory of Prudence' by Simon Vouet

Verse 4 says: *'Humility is the fear of the LORD; its wages are riches and honour and life.'* Humility is to do with being humble, and that always makes me think of Uriah Heep, in the Dickens book of David Copperfield. Heep's character is notable for his cloying humility, unctuousness, obsequiousness, and insincerity, making frequent references to his own 'umbleness! Having studied this book at school, it must have been the first time I became aware of the word 'humble,' so I viewed it negatively.

However, one of the meanings of humility is the *'quality of having a modest or low view of one's importance.'* Of course, this may mean that one has low self-esteem; alternatively, being humble shows the quality of not thinking you are better than other people. Being humble is recognizing that you're flawed and have weaknesses. In contrast, having low self-esteem is only viewing yourself as having flaws and weaknesses, and rarely acknowledging your own strengths. Humility should be considered a good thing. For example, humble people handle stress more effectively and report higher levels of physical and mental well-being. They also show greater generosity, helpfulness, and gratitude—all things that can only serve to draw us closer to others.

So this all goes to show that we must take great care how we label or name other people, particularly children. Give great consideration as to how you refer to them, see the positive in their characters and show your pride in them. As verse 6 of our Proverbs reading states: *'Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.'*

Father, help us to follow the example of Jesus in everything we do.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Sally Wesley, BCM

Collect Prayer for The Third Sunday of Epiphany

Almighty God,
whose Son revealed in signs and miracles,
the wonder of your saving presence:
renew your people with your heavenly grace,
and in all our weakness sustain us by your mighty power;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.



Proverbs 22:1-6

- 1 A good name is more desirable than great riches;
to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.
- 2 Rich and poor have this in common:
The Lord is the Maker of them all.
- 3 The prudent see danger and take refuge,
but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.
- 4 Humility is the fear of the Lord;
its wages are riches and honour and life.
- 5 In the paths of the wicked are snares and pitfalls,
but those who would preserve their life stay far from them.
- 6 Start children off on the way they should go,
and even when they are old they will not turn from it.



Luke 4: 14-21- The Beginning Jesus' Galilean Ministry

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’

Schedule of Services

This schedule is correct at this time but may be subject to future alterations – please check on our website for the most up-to-date information.

All services start at 10am, unless marked differently on the table below.

Owing to the new Government Coronavirus restrictions, masks must once again be worn in church services and services must be booked by contacting the Benefice Office on 01962 880 845 or office@downsbenefice.org.uk

<i>Date</i>	<i>Ch</i>	<i>Cr</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>Sp</i>	<i>Wh</i>
<i>23rd Jan</i>			Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer	8am – Holy Communion
<i>26th Jan</i>			Mid-Week Holy Communion		
<i>30th Jan</i>		Benefice Holy Communion			
<i>6th Feb</i>	Morning Prayer to mark 70 th Anniversary of HM The Queen’s accession to the throne	Holy Communion	4pm - Café Church		

<i>13th Feb</i>			Holy Communion		Morning Prayer
<i>20th Feb</i>	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer		8am – Holy Communion	
<i>27th Feb</i>			Morning Prayer	Morning Worship	8am – Holy Communion
<i>2nd March ASH WEDNESDAY</i>	12 noon - Holy Communion with Ashes		Holy Communion with Ashes		<i>With Chilbolton</i>