

Connect Leaders' Notes

Matthew 3:13-17

Sunday saw the baptism of Sarah, Nick and Barbara. Spend some time talking about how people found it. What aspects of the service were particularly significant? Where were people challenged? Take opportunity to ask people of their experiences of baptism.

Turning our attention to the sermon...

How can we know that baptism is very important? [Jesus was baptised; Jesus commanded baptism; the witness of the Early Church was that all Christians were baptised. The impression is that it is a vital aspect of the conversion process (along with repentance, faith, receiving the Spirit).]

What do we learn from Romans 6:3-10 about what baptism means? [It's a way that God has given for us to identify with Jesus in His death and resurrection.] Why does this imply that baptism is more than simply symbolic akin to wearing a poppy on Remembrance Day? [Baptism is not a mere visual aid. It is a "sacrament" – an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible work of God – where God is the active agent. He channels His grace (the experience of His loving kindness) to us as we come to baptism in faith. He meets with us as we "die with" and are "raised with" Christ. (Rom 6)]

What are we promising in baptism? What is God promising? [That we repent, that we trust, that we choose to identify with Jesus in His death and resurrection. That He cleanses and forgives and receives us into His family....] Note that God's promise to us is by far and away more important than what we promise to Him. **Why do you think this is?** [The work of Christ is always primary and the decisive cause.]

Why is it significant that Jesus was affirmed by His Father before the start of His public ministry? Describe how Jesus' ministry would be affected by the fact that He has this affirmation *before* He had started? [He would be free to be obedient to His Father, free to give Himself to others, free to take risks and to face opposition. If He needed to *achieve* His sense of identity through performance, rather than to *receive* it from the Father, He would have lived very differently.... Perhaps He would have been unrighteously angry, a workaholic, controlling.] **What difference does it make to us to know that all our security, value and significance come from the identity we receive from being in Christ, i.e. a child of God with direct access to the Father, forgiveness, cleansing and a lasting inheritance? What happens if we live as Christians without this knowledge of our Father's acceptance? What behaviours might we manifest (with specific examples) as we seek to achieve our identity rather than receive it?**

Take some time to pray for the three who were baptised.