



6. Who are you? (Luke 3:21-38)

Around the War Memorial this morning, we remembered people. We didn't know them - all that's left are their names and what service they were in and the fact that they had died serving their country. Their name and their regiment and when they died confirmed to us that they were soldiers, heroes who had died for their country.

Names, titles and job descriptions are all ways we identify people, who they are and what they do. When I was a teacher, I was in a college where there were a lot of students. The most important thing often was trying to get their names right. It helps not to start off on the wrong foot. Names can be very confusing and sometimes it's helpful just to have alternatives or nicknames. I remember an episode of Dr Who where a space station had been taken over by a horrible monster who looked like a blob of jelly with shark's teeth. He was served by a character called the Editor who introduced Dr Who to the monster. He said "let me introduce you to the Jagraffess of the Holy Hadrojassic Maxarodenfoe: but I just call him Max!"

One of the things that has really bugged me throughout my life has been the curse of the name I was given. You see my full name is James Mark Reid. There's nothing wrong with any of those names actually. My parents thought that James Mark sounded better than Mark James. The problem is that we live in a world where people are known by their first names, not their second. Try opening a bank account, try applying for a job, try going through any official process and the first name curse comes in. They insist on sending me chummy letters "Dear James" - no I'm Mark actually. I was told by our bank that I couldn't have Mark on my cards and cheques because my name was James! They don't seem to have any problem with the Rev or the Doc.

That covers me, but what about the subject of today's reading - Jesus? We find that Luke is at pains to point out who Jesus is and in just a few verses today we have revealed to use some of the most *profound* things in Scripture: which is another way of saying that we are introduced to ideas that it's hard to get our heads around. We have in a few words just who Jesus is: *When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*

So who was Jesus? The voice came from heaven *"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."* He is the Son. But the picture at Jesus' baptism is also a clear picture of God as Trinity - The Father, the Son and the Spirit. *And as he was praying, heaven was opened 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son..."* In the first chapter we saw how Jesus had an amazing conception by the Holy Spirit. In this we see a picture of Jesus' divine nature. He traces his Sonship to a Father in heaven - conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin.

But in this passage we also see Jesus' Sonship as being the same as ours. Look at all those names - mostly un-pronounceable but show He had an earthly descent and right at the start he traces his heritage to Adam and to Adam's creator: God. If we could know our full genealogy we could also trace back to Adam and to God. Jesus was human. He had all the rights and privileges of being human. He is the Creator who became part and parcel of the race He created. Fully God, fully Man. The Sonship of Jesus is two-fold - it is one of creation - He was born into the race He created but His birth also commenced a new "relationship", if that's the right word, in the Godhead. As the Son, He shows submission to the Father and in this scene we see an anointing and empowering by the Spirit into the service of God. Father, Son, Spirit - one God, three Persons.

Now you can see that in a few words we are introduced to something that is deeply profound. But that profoundness also falls back to us. You see, we also trace our genealogy back to Adam - we are of the family of God by creation. But we are also the sons of God by adoption. Remember, God makes us His sons irrespective of our gender, because only sons inherited in the world of the Bible. We are brought into the family of God.

That's what's also profound about this genealogy. Look at verse 23: *Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, Hang on a sec. If you look in Matthew 1:16 we find Jacob became the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, from whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. (WEB)*

How come Joseph has two fathers? Heli and Jacob. Something that you'll notice about the Gospels is that we are told lots about Jesus' earthly family, but we are never given any information about Mary's parents or family. We know she had a cousin who was married to a Priest but what of her family? Nothing is made of that. Back to inheritance. Remember - sons inherited the father's name and possessions, it got complicated if a father had no sons. According to Israel's law, if a daughter were the only heir to the father, she would inherit all his possessions, inheritance and rights—but only *if* she married within her tribe ([Num. 27:1-8](#); [36:6-8](#)). What if Mary had been an only daughter or the oldest daughter? If Mary had no brothers who could be heirs to her father, she was able to transmit the rights she inherited from her father to her husband upon marriage. If her father was Heli, Joseph in effect became Heli's son and heir, giving him and therefore Jesus a legal claim on David's throne. Therefore Jesus inherited his rights to being a son of David in two ways. In Matthew's gospel he gained a legal right through being the son of Joseph. And as He is alive, He still has that right and the only Jew living who can prove outright He has a legal and bloodline claim to the throne of David. And one day He's going to return to claim it!

We are in God's family by adoption - God has given us legal rights to call ourselves the sons of God. Why - because God loves us. That same phrase was used of Jesus: *You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.*" John said: *Behold, how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!* (1 John 3:1) And that's what we are. And Jesus, having affirmed who He was, went on to live according to what God had called Him to. It begs a question: if we are part of the family of God; are we living as God has called us. Jesus revealed who His Father was in the way that He lived, how He spoke, how He acted. What do people see in us? Do they see the Father? Or just another pious religious person?

But there is one last point. Luke does not deal with why Jesus chose to be baptized when He obviously didn't need to like the other three Gospel writers do. He goes straight to the purpose of why Jesus was there without explanation. This was Jesus' commissioning, the day He took on His earthly ministry and was empowered by the Spirit to do so. This was His purpose, His call, His destiny. God has a family and a family business and we are all called to it and have our role in it. Our role is obviously different to Jesus' role in respect of what He came to do. But there is much that is the same. We know that it is only through the Spirit that we are called and empowered to do the work of God - like He was (more on that next time).

For Jesus, coming to the Jordan put a new dimension on Baptism. It represented a time when in submission to the Father and empowered by the Spirit He was going to work out the purposes of God. That should be the same for us too. Do we know our call? Do we know our destiny? Do we know the power of the Spirit filling us and allowing us to do the work of God? You may say to me that we can't draw that parallel. But we can. The ministry of Jesus was characterized by God doing remarkable things and Jesus said to His disciples *"Truly, truly I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I am doing. He will do even greater works than these because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12)*. I wonder how many of us were taught at our baptism to explore our destiny and seek empowerment of the Holy Spirit. This passage says we should have - but it's never too late to seek that empowerment if we never did.

Maybe you've never been baptized in water. It's significant here that Jesus' baptism coincided with His anointing by the Spirit. You've never publicly confessed that you've turned to God, that in Christ you've found forgiveness of sins, you've found new life. Then you should be baptized because that's what Jesus wants you to do. But part of living a new life is realizing that you may get wet with water, but God wants to immerse you, dunk you and drench you in the Holy Spirit. For many people water baptism is also a deep spiritual experience and a picture not just of what God has done in your life, but what Jesus can do as the baptizer with the Holy Spirit and with fire. So if you haven't been baptized in water then talk to me - it can be arranged. God wants to bless you through it in the power of His Spirit.

You may say "all this Holy Spirit stuff isn't true of my life. Empowered - hardly". You may have even come to the rather depressing conclusion, that many believers do, that God doesn't work in power today or that power ministry is the preserve of the minority. But it isn't. Nowhere in scripture does it say that. Most of the NT was written to groups of people with promises that apply to all. But what it does tell us that we must be prepared to make that conscious choice to enter in to them.

Look at this *When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."* What was Jesus doing when all this happened. he was praying. In fact, if you go through the Gospels, you always find Jesus talking to His Father at all the critical points in His ministry. One observation I have made as a believer and a Pastor in the 39 years that I have rusted Christ is that wherever I have seen power manifestations of the Spirit, I have also seen people who were doing real business with God in prayer. Praying, listening, obeying. Jesus did business with His Father in prayer. He spent days there, nights there and what did we see - the sick healed, the dead raised, the demoniacal delivered, but most importantly of all, the lost found, the captives freed, those without God brought near by the blood of Christ - how - by the power of the Spirit and through the ministry of those who walk and talk with God. Do you want to see the power of God in your life? In Swaffham? Then we need to learn to pray like we mean business!

Jesus was praying and things happened. You know, none of this is rocket science. We have considered profound things this morning. But right at it's root is something that's easy to understand, never requires any intelligence or spiritual enlightenment to understand. If we pray God does great things by the power of His Spirit - things that will fulfill His purpose of bringing lost men and women to Himself.

And if it isn't happening? You know the conclusion that you must draw. Don't live in denial of it. Start to nurture a serious prayer life.

Maybe God has been challenging you this morning. Many of us don't see God's power in our lives - in fact we maybe hardly acknowledge His presence. We know that this is true for our church. We spend little time in His presence and then wonder why we are struggling. Don't wonder. You know the truth. You've known the truth for years. Get on your knees and do something about it! What's more meet with others and pray - you don't have to wait for someone to organize a prayer meeting to pray with someone else. Find someone to pray regularly with as pairs or triplets or a group. Go round each other's houses. Have coffee. Pray.

Maybe you know that it's time to act. You know Jesus as your Saviour but you want to know the power of His Spirit in your life. The just ask. Remember I said last time that Jesus is the one who drenches people with the Holy Spirit and with fire. So ask Him for a really good soaking in the Holy Spirit. Deal with issues in your life. Call on God to fill you with His Spirit. Get wet.

But for all of us this morning the message remains. Pray, ask God to empower you afresh with His Spirit. Don't live in denial or ignorance of the power of God. It's your adoption right as a son of God. Ask for it and honour God in it.

Let's pray.

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me (fill me anew)