

June 30 2013

Scripture Lesson ~ *Luke 3: 15-17*

Sermon – *With you I am well pleased*

**I don't have to tell you, our life of faith can sometimes be as chaotic as the rest of life. And why should they not be? Because our lives of faith are a part of our greater lives. And so we might become ill, or we might become unemployed, or might have a child or get married, lose a loved one, or move; or anyone of a hundred things which might cause, distress or upheaval or downright change in our lives. And all of these things will affect and be affected by our life of faith as well, our walk with Jesus, our walk with our brothers and sisters of faith.**

**So at the very least we may change, we may grow or we may see things differently as a result of the things that affect us. But on the other end of the scale we could have a crisis, or we could lose our way, or we could get off the track, even lose heart as a result of those hard knocks. Rare then is when the engines of life are firing on all cylinders. When we feel as Voltaire's character in his work *Candide*, that everything works out for the best, in the best of all possible worlds. Like the poet Pope, who said God is in his heaven and all is right with the world.**

**But those times do come from time to time in life, and thank God that those times do come sometimes, not because we need a respite from life's troubles, but because we need to build up our spiritual energy for those future times of trial. We need to have some sort of affirmation that God walks with us in good times and in bad and that we are on the right pathway in life. There may be a time when this simple feeling of gratitude and satisfaction about life gives us a sense of peace and calm. We may be left in a time of prayer and worship that gives us that same peace. Those times may come and be felt in the reality that you have found your niche in life, in work or in church, with friends or with your spouse, or children.**

**I think for Jesus these times of affirmation where God was present in his life a very big way happened in various ways and in various times as well. One of the most significant was his time of baptism and in the river. Jesus was around 30 years old when this happened at the hands of his cousin John the Baptist and there is much speculation as what he had been up to as of this point in his life. Was he in fact running the family carpentry business, taking care of his widowed mother and his siblings? Was he in the desert with John**

**and perhaps others in that Cameron community, which may have in fact spawned the dead sea scrolls.**

**We really aren't sure but we do know he was at the verge of beginning his ministry in earnest and in his position of the one sent from God, he didn't need baptism in the same sense that we feel we need baptism in the present day. So why in the world did Jesus come and appear at that same river as the rest of us, appear with scribes and Pharisees, tax collectors and soldiers, regular people who were regularly falling short of God's potential for each of our lives?**

**Well I think partly, I believe he showed up at that river as an example that we are Christians, we need to be at the river at some point of time in our life. Taking stock of which we are, deciding where we want to go in life, and making the positive change which is repentance that we need to make in order to live the best life that God could possibly imagine for us to live.**

**But I think there is another reason too, and it comes in the words and symbols that accompany Jesus baptism which came from the very heart of God, and a part of that event in his life. You remember that when Jesus was baptized at the Jordan that day by John, prior to his testing in the wilderness, prior to the start of his ministry, two important things happened.**

**First of all the heavens were opened and the Spirit of God descended on Jesus in the form of a dove and secondly God's voice came from those same heavens and said what "You are my Son, you are the Beloved, with you I am well pleased, You are my Son, you are the Beloved, with you I am well pleased". Wow!, what more positive affirmation from God could anyone get? That God was with you and you are on the right pathway in life. A visible, tangible symbol of God's spirit in the form of a dove, words of comfort and affection, an affirmation, Son, Beloved, well pleased.**

**I wish that I could have promised such things to each of you, the Confirmands particularly when you were baptized, I wish I could have pulled off that kind of spiritual comfort for you and your parents even today as we celebrate this service of Confirmation which is in the same way is an affirmation of God's love and mercy and presence in all of our life's as well as the life's of these confirmation kids as well. Because no matter who we are, no matter where we are on life's journey, God says to us in this act of confirmation as God does in our time of baptism – Son or Daughter – you are beloved, I am so pleased with you. And so Luke and Jessica and Travis, you are God's daughter, you are God's sons, you are beloved and with you God is**

**so well pleased. As well in the fact that God loves and delights in each one of us who is present here today.**

**So take these words of affirmation, take these words of love of God and save them in your hearts. Together we say, Amen.**