

In this New Testament account we hear of the spread of the early church as converts are received from among the Samaritans. Many Jews would have felt ethnic tension and even animosity toward Samaritans. Peter and John travel to Samaria and lay their hands upon the converts, that they might receive the Holy Spirit and know the fullness of God's presence and power. The Lord's Spirit continues to work in surprising ways, surmounting cultural barriers and traditional enmities as the gospel continues its progress. Hear now these words from Acts.

Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Our gospel is the story of Jesus' baptism. Some people expected that John the Baptist might be the Christ, but he points to a yet mightier one to come whose baptism will be decisive. The Holy Spirit is then manifest and shows this one to be Jesus. A voice from heaven speaks to him in words that echo ancient oracles concerning the king and the calling of the Lord's chosen servant. Hear now these words from the gospel of Luke.

And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not;

John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,

And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

This is the word of the Lord. **May the reading and the hearing of your word inform our hearts, comfort our souls and guide our feet.**