Sermon: **heaven was opened, & the Holy Spirit came down upon him… you are my own dear Son. I am pleased with you.** (Luke 3.21f)

I find Joy at baptisms. Parish Baptismal Register – 15 in 10 years! Two were adults – Frank and Shay.   
Jesus was baptised as an adult by John, who said he himself was not Messiah; a Messiah who would lead, challenge and have great *mana*.

At Jesus’ baptism – Luke is not interested in where Jesus was baptised nor by whom, but how baptism reveals Jesus. What is revealed about him?

[1] Heaven was opened

Stephen (Acts 7.56): **I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right-hand side of God.**

Echo of Isaiah 64.1: **Why don’t you open the heavens and come down?**

It shows there is something decisive about Jesus, Celtic Christianity talks about *thin places* (places where the gap between heaven and earth in thin)– here is one. In Jesus heaven is revealed.

[2] The Holy Spirit came upon him (like a dove)

Messiah = Christ = Anointed One. Normally refers to a king (eg David was anointed), hence expected Messiah was a king (and hence Herod’s fears). Holy Spirit also came upon Bezalel (Exodus 35.30). He was given for two reasons – to signify a special role, and to give the power to fulfil that role.

But NB – ‘like a dove’, associated with peace (Noah’s Ark) to indicate the nature of the role Christ was to be.

[3] God spoke

Luke records two times when God speaks, here & 9.35 (**This is my Son, whom I have chosen – listen to him!**)

Both times begin a new chapter in Jesus’ life (start of ministry, and journey to Jerusalem).

Both times Jesus declared a Son (as kings/Messiah were). Here God is pleased with him, with its echoes of the angels’ song in 2.14.

It does not matter whether or not we have experienced any of these things – God’s revelation, God’s special blessing, or God speaking to us – what matters is the importance of JC – he straddles the divide between heaven and earth, he is God’s Chosen, and God is pleased with him.

In the end, the focus is not on us, our problems, our needs, our fears and hopes and dreams, but on him.   
All these become less important in his light. How will our parish fare? What does the future hold for us individually? We recognise these but put them to one side.

The old adage: JOY = Jesus first, Others second, Yourself last, may be a little twee and debatable, but holds some truth. If we as individuals & as a parish want to discover and/or retain joy, we need to focus on Jesus.