Reflection

Isaiah’s prophecy is a cry of vindication that God has not forgotten God’s people. The people are to rejoice at the coming of their Saviour God who gathers them like lambs into his arms. This is such a tender and gentle image that made perfect sense to the people of Jesus’ time. It is a little harder for many of us who are so removed from the seeming simplicity of country life. But there is a bite to what Isaiah is saying here, vindication comes only after the people have paid twice for their sin. It would be very hard to be reconciled to the gentle shepherd image at the end of Isaiah’s piece were we to be left with only this message.

Our true consolation is found in the Gospel. Here we find another idyllic scene that sees Jesus baptised by John in the Jordan. John is only too aware of how unworthy he is using water for baptism. He knows that Jesus has a much greater baptism to give. But it is not only baptism that Jesus gives. It is through God’s own beloved Son that we are vindicated without paying any penalty for our sins. But there is still more—not only does Jesus pay for our sins, he also gives us the Holy Spirit to be the fire that keeps us in God’s presence. Truly, our God is great indeed!