

Lord God, through your Holy Spirit, help us to hear Jesus calling us today. Amen

- A man is being baptized by the minister of his local church, in the river that runs around the edge of the town. As the minister pushes him under the water three times, he says “Joe, from this day on you will have a new name you will be known as Matthew. From this day forth you have a new life. You are to shed your sinful ways and that includes no more gambling or alcohol.” Later that day the newly baptized man goes home and heads straight for the fridge. He grabs a bottle of beer and says to the beer “From this day on you will have a new name,. You will be known as green tea.” He opens the bottle of beer and takes a long swig.
- Does being a Christian change anything?
 - Well it didn’t seem to for this man, even though he had been baptized by being pushed under the water, rather than having a stream of water poured on his head.
- Anglicans are not good at hard lines. We don’t baptize by pushing Nancy, or even Danny, under the water, for which you’re probably really grateful.
 - We’re known by some for being wishy washy. After all surely Nancy should have completed a course and got a certificate before she was baptized. How can she possibly know enough about God without that?
- Does being baptized make any difference? Particularly for someone as young as Nancy
- The answer is in our bible readings today
- I’m going to ask you to repeat the first line. When I say ‘*For freedom*’, I would like you to reply’ **Christ has set us free**’ Let’s try it a few times.
- Who has set us free? Well it’s Jesus, as you keep telling me.
- ‘*you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters;*’ as St Paul says just a line further on.
 - It’s the freedom from having to achieve anything or prove anything before you are accepted by God. And baptism, if nothing else, is a sign that we are accepted by God.
- It’s God’s choice not ours. It’s Jesus who does the calling, not us calling God. He knows us by name, and calls us by name, and you Danny, have answered. And David and Natalie, you have answered for Nancy.
- ‘*For freedom*’, ’ **Christ has set us free**’
- These readings are all how about life is, rather than how we would like it to be. Life is not just love, joy, peace and patience that are mentioned, but also strife, jealousy, anger and quarrels. Who says Christianity is out of touch and irrelevant?
- ‘*For freedom*’, ’ **Christ has set us free**’
 - And these readings are more about the direction we are heading than what we have achieved. Lord knows, Jesus is only too aware of the trials and tribulations of daily life. After he shared them with us and he was subject to all the frustrations and disappointments that we are. In fact, probably rather more than we are.
- In our gospel reading we have a woeful little collection of people who Jesus calls or who say they want to follow him. And each one fails because they want to do it on their own terms, to tick a box, to gain a qualification, rather than to be truly free.
 - But you’re not like that are you!
- ‘*For freedom*’, ’ **Christ has set us free**’
- Becoming a Christian is a lifestyle choice rather than something to put on your CV.
 - It’s about facing on the direction of love, Jesus’ love for us. It’s about a journey towards all those wonderful values that St Paul lists, ‘*the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*’
- And baptism is about asking the power of the Holy Spirit, to give you his fruit, the fruit of the Spirit!
- So, where’s he sending you?