

Service for Week 6<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> January

2025- By Chaplain Andy

**Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, we praise you that, above all else, you are a God of love—not of judgement, anger or vengeance, but of constant and total love.

Although we repeatedly fail you, still you continue to love us. For your awesome love, we give you thanks and offer our worship in the name of Christ. **Amen**

**Say to yourself- The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father who art in heaven.....

**Amen**

***Bible Reading Isaiah 43 :1-7***

But now, this is what the LORD says—he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life. Do not be afraid, for I am with you;

I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth— everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

**2nd Reading Luke 3 21-23**

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. Holy words, Holy wisdom,

***Thanks be to God***

***Reflection***

Between the accounts of Jesus's birth in Bethlehem, and when he started his ministry, we don't know very much about Jesus's life. He was taken to the temple by Mary and Joseph when he was 12 years old as we read in the gospels but after that we know nothing about his life until he was about 30 when baptized by John the Baptist.

It is thought that the young Jesus growing up learned something about his father's trade. It also seems that Jesus did not attend full-time training to become a Rabbi in the way someone would do today. But it was

the custom for boys to attend school in the synagogue, and learning there usually meant memorizing by constant repetition.

So, from an early age Jesus would have studied the oral tradition of Jewish law, then when in his teens learnt commentary on scripture and Jewish civil and ceremonial law. Also studying in great depth, the Torah consisting of the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. But it was not just Jesus who was studying at school, most of the other children of the time would have studied in the same way. To such an extent that most of the people in Jesus' day had large sections of scripture committed to memory.

Jesus when he started his ministry was recognised and addressed as Rabbi by many people across all sections of society. But Rabbis then were like itinerate preachers, lay ministers or local preachers are today in as much as they did not have a particular temple or synagogue but traveled around preaching and teaching. Rabbis in those times, like lay ministers today almost always had an occupation from which they gained their livelihood. It has been assumed he worked during this time with his father who traditionally was thought to be a carpenter but the Greek translation suggests he was also possibly a

stonemason and builder. We think that Joseph who was much older than Mary died some time before Jesus was 30 as he is not mentioned after Jesus starts his ministry.

This gives us a picture then of the young man Jesus going to school, working with his father and becoming known as 'the carpenter's son' He had from his start in a bare stable a very modest upbringing. An ordinary person who was extra-ordinary as he was God in a human form. But his modest ordinariness helps us to connect with God through Jesus, whatever our own circumstances.

Other faiths have their own way of communicating with God. But for those with a Christian faith this connection and relationship with Jesus on a human level enables us to connect directly with God. We don't have to go through churches, or priests, ministers, lay or ordained in order to communicate with God.

This is what we have been celebrating over Christmas – yes, we have been celebrating the birth of Jesus but also the start of our understanding of God's love for us, his forgiveness for our wrongdoing, and of us being able to share God's love with others. **Amen**

**Closing prayer**

Loving God, I thank you for coming in Jesus Christ.

**Amen**

Prayers inspired by Prayerfully Yours by Nick Fawcett