

## Service for Week 18<sup>th</sup>- 24<sup>th</sup> Aug 2025

By Chaplain Andy

### **Our Opening Prayer.**

Loving God, it is easy to trust you when life is good. But when circumstances change, then faith is suddenly put to the test. Sometimes we feel that we are swimming against the current that sweeps us deeper into difficulty. But however fierce the storm you are there by our side.

Teach us to hold firmly to you, knowing that you will keep hold of us until the storm passes and calm returns, however long that might be.

**Amen**

### *The Lord's Prayer*

Our Father who art in heaven.....

**Amen**

### *Bible Reading Matthew 16:13-20*

#### *Peter's Confession of Christ*

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the

kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

Holy words, Holy wisdom,

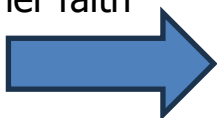
***Thanks be to God.***

### **Reflection**

This week one of our leading politicians said that she is now a 'cultural Christian' having lost faith in God. She went on to say that this happened when she read about Josef Fritzl in Austria who kept his own daughter captive for 24 years, raped her many times and fathered 7 children with her. He is serving life imprisonment for his crime.

I think that throughout the UK and the world there are many 'cultural Christians'. That is, they accept the teachings of Jesus on how we should live our lives. They accept the ten commandments which has formed the basis of our laws and legal system. They accept the 'culture' and traditions of the Christian church, even perhaps attending church services for weddings, funerals, and festivals such as Christmas and Easter. However, they find it difficult to actually believe in God, and to believe that Jesus Christ was of God and came in human form to reveal God's forgiveness and love for us.

When asked why she had lost her faith



in God the politician said that while her prayers were answered for relatively trivial things such as her getting good grades in exams or the bus being on time, the prayers of Josef Fritzl's daughter to God for rescue and release were not.

It is difficult to understand why some prayers are seemingly answered by God but others are not. But if we think about it people pray for outcomes which are often conflicting. In times of war both sides are praying for victory for example. Everyone has the free will to imprison, rape, steal even to kill another human being. If we didn't have that free will we would be like robots programmed to carry out a uniform set of behavior patterns. Everyone would be the same without emotions (regardless of how good they make AI- artificial intelligence). There would be no true love, no families, no close relationships, no drama, no real life worth living. I believe that life and free will is something that has been given by God to each of us through evolution over thousands of years.

If we are not suffering from mental illness or taking mind altering amounts of alcohol or drugs, we can use our free will to either do good or bad things. What makes us decide to control our emotions not to commit crime and harm others is I think a combination of things. The risk of being found out and ending up with a

fine or in prison is one factor which can also bring with it condemnation and isolation from society. But if we believe in God a greater incentive not to commit crime is that it goes against the will of God and we will be judged by God for our actions. Judged not necessarily at the end of our life but now for our behavior and what we have done.

How do we know if how we are conducting our lives, or what we have done goes against God's will? That is where the 10 commandments, many of which are incorporated within other major world religions, and the teachings of Jesus Christ give us the answers and the guide for our lives. Jesus asked the disciples who people said that he was. They said 'one of the prophets' – which was defining Jesus in a cultural context, as someone who went about preaching and healing.

There is a difference between a 'cultural Christian' and one who believes in God and Jesus Christ. It was Peter who told Jesus "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." What do you believe? **Amen**

### ***Closing Prayer***

Gracious God, in the good and the bad, the happy and the sad, help me to keep on trusting you, confident that your purpose for my life will win through and your love triumph over all.

**Amen.**

Prayers inspired by 'Prayerfully Yours' by Nick Fawcett.