

Sunday 11th January 2026

Bible Readings

Acts 10:34–43 NRSV

[34] Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, [35] but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. [36] You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. [37] That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: [38] how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. [39] We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; [40] but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, [41] not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. [42] He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. [43] All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Matthew 3:13–17 NRSV

[13] Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptised by him. [14] John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?" [15] But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness." Then he consented. [16] And when Jesus had been baptised, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. [17] And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

Questions

1. What key declaration does Peter make in Acts 10:34?
2. How does this idea connect with Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:13–17?
3. Why is Peter's speech in Acts 10 considered a turning point?
4. Why does Jesus insist on being baptised by John?
5. How do both passages emphasise Jesus' role in God's plan?

6. What role does the Holy Spirit play in each passage?
7. How is peace described in Acts 10:36?
8. What does God's voice at Jesus' baptism reveal?
9. How do these passages shape the church's mission?
10. What practical challenge do these texts offer believers today?

Extra:

- Q1. How do these passages together shape a theology of revelation and election?
- Q2. What do these texts reveal about the relationship between Christology and mission?

Reflection: Called, Anointed and Sent

Acts 10:34–43 and Matthew 3:13–17

These two readings invite us to think about who Jesus is, how deeply God loves us, and what it means to live as people called by God.

In Matthew 3, Jesus comes to John the Baptist to be baptised in the River Jordan. John is surprised. He believes that Jesus should baptise him, not the other way around. Yet Jesus chooses to stand alongside ordinary people and enter the waters of baptism. As Jesus comes out of the water, something remarkable happens. The heavens open, the Spirit of God descends like a dove, and the Father's voice declares: **"This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."**

Here we see Father, Son and Holy Spirit together. It is an important moment in revealing the Trinity, but it also tells us something about Jesus' identity. Before his public ministry begins, Jesus is declared to be the beloved Son. This matters for our own Christian lives. Our relationship with God begins with God's love for us. We do not have to earn that love through achievements or good works. We respond to the love that God has already shown us.

Acts 10 shows what happens when that love spreads beyond expected boundaries. Peter is speaking in the home of Cornelius, a Gentile. Peter has come to understand something that challenges his previous assumptions: **"God shows no partiality."**

God's love is not restricted to one nation, background, social group, or type of person. Peter tells those gathered about Jesus: his ministry, his death and his resurrection. He explains that Jesus was **"anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power"** and went about doing good.

The connection with Jesus' baptism is striking. In Matthew we see the Spirit descending upon Jesus. In Acts, Peter remembers Jesus as the one anointed by that same Spirit to bring healing, goodness and hope. And now the message about Jesus is being shared with others. This gives us a pattern for our own discipleship: **Loved by God → strengthened by the Spirit → sent to love others.**

Our baptism is not simply something that happened once in the past. It reminds us who we are and whose we are. We belong to God and are called to participate in his work. Peter's discovery that "God shows no partiality" also challenges us. It is easy to decide who we think belongs and who does not. Yet the gospel continually pushes the boundaries of our welcome. If God's grace reaches beyond the boundaries we create, then our churches and our individual lives should reflect that same generous welcome.

These readings therefore leave us with both comfort and challenge. The comfort is that we are loved by God. The challenge is that the love we receive is never intended to stop with us. Like Peter, we are called to discover just how wide God's welcome really is. And like Jesus, we are called to live lives shaped by the Holy Spirit—doing good, bringing hope and making God's love visible to others.

Questions for Personal Reflection

1. What difference does it make to your life to know that your Christian journey begins with being loved by God rather than trying to earn God's love?
2. Are there people whom you find difficult to welcome or accept? How might Peter's words, "God shows no partiality," challenge you?
3. Where might the Holy Spirit be calling you to make God's love visible through a simple act of kindness, service or encouragement this week?