

Lectionary readings: Isaiah 42: 1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10: 34-43; Matthew 3: 13-17

For reflection and prayer

- **Isaiah 42:** These are words spoken of Israel, but words which apply to us too. God says to each one of us: 'You are my chosen one, and I am pleased with you. I've bathed you with my Spirit, my life.' And it's because each one of us is bathed with God's Spirit that we can do the work that He calls us to do - opening (spiritually) blind eyes, releasing those who are in prisons of fear, guilt, unforgiveness, resentment, hatred etc., dealing gently and lovingly with people and bringing justice to the situations in which we find ourselves. He wants us to be as Christ in the world in which we live, showing Christ to people where we are. It might be helpful this week for us to reflect on what it means to be 'bathed with God's Spirit and life.'
- **Psalm 29:** This is a Psalm which speaks of God's glory and how His glory is revealed in and through creation. Here are a few verses for us to reflect on this week: *'The voice of the Beloved is powerful ... breaks the bonds of oppression, shatters the chains of injustice. Love invites all to the dance of freedom, to sing the Beloved's song of truth.'* (Psalms for Praying) May the God of love, our Beloved, give us strength to be all we can be and reveal His glory through our lives; and may He bless us with peace so that we exude peace wherever we go.
- **Acts 10:** God has no favourites for He sees each one of us as His beloved and each one of us has free access to God. God's door is always open to us and indeed to

every human being. Just as Peter came to see that Gentiles were accepted by God equally with Jews, so we need to see every human being as someone made in the image and likeness of God, loved by God and precious to Him, so that we treat every person we meet as if we are greeting Christ Himself. If we reach out with love and acceptance to all, then more and more people will come to know God's love for them, for it is amazing how many people there are who find it difficult to believe that God loves them.

- **Matthew 3:** I love this passage about Jesus' baptism by John. This was the moment when Jesus heard God's call and He knew Himself to be God's child, chosen by God, one in whom God delighted. It was a moment of awakening. And so it was for me on my first retreat when I heard God say to me, through this passage, 'You, too, are My beloved child; My heart delights in you.' It was a turning point in my spiritual journey, a time of awakening, exciting, exhilarating, challenging, heart-warming, life-changing. Hear God address these words to you every day this week: *'You are my beloved child, and I am fully pleased with you.'* Let these words ring in your ears day after day. This is the God we worship, a God who has nothing but love in His heart for us. Feel His loving arms around you; rest in His loving embrace and let yourself be overwhelmed by God's love.

'Be silent. Be still. Alone, empty before your God, say nothing. Ask nothing. Be silent. Be still. Let your God look upon you. That is all. God knows. God understands. God loves you with an enormous love, and only wants to look upon you with that love. Quiet. Still. Be. Let your God love you.'
(Edwina Gateley)