

Title: *You are My Son, the Beloved*

- **Reflecting on the New Year:**
 - A time to review the past year with gratitude, seek forgiveness, and look forward to spiritual growth in 2025.
 - Challenging questions for the year: How deeply do we want to follow Jesus and become his apprentices?
- **The Example of Jesus' Baptism:**
 - In Luke's account, Jesus aligns with sinners, standing in solidarity with the broken and sinful, identifying with humanity rather than judging or separating himself.
 - A call for believers to embrace and support others, especially those struggling, as Jesus did.
- **The Power of Prayer:**
 - Luke highlights Jesus praying at pivotal moments, showing that his strength and direction came from dependence on God through prayer.
 - Prayer remains essential for the church and individuals to seek guidance, wisdom, and the Holy Spirit's power.
- **Affirmation from God:**
 - At his baptism, Jesus received divine affirmation: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you, I am well pleased," even before beginning his ministry.
 - Similarly, Isaiah 43 reminds believers of God's love, calling, and affirmation for each of us.
- **Challenges for the Church:**
 - Are we truly welcoming and supportive of the broken and sinful, or do we focus on outward success and respectability?
 - How can we live and love like Jesus, depending on God and fostering a community rooted in prayer and inclusivity?
- **Living in God's Love and Purpose:**
 - Knowing our identity as God's beloved strengthens and empowers us to live out his calling.
 - In 2025, believers are called to:
 1. Identify with and support all people.
 2. Depend on God in prayer for strength and direction.
 3. Embrace God's affirmation as the foundation of their purpose.

Let us respond to these truths in prayer and action as individuals and as a community of faith.

Questions:

1. How does Jesus' choice to be baptised alongside sinners in Luke 3 demonstrate his solidarity with humanity? How can we as a church and as individuals emulate this example in our interactions with others, especially those who feel broken or marginalised?
2. The people in Luke 3 were "filled with expectation." What does this reveal about their hopes and understanding of the Messiah? How do we ensure that our expectations are directed toward God rather than misplaced in human leaders or institutions?
3. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus prays after his baptism and before significant moments in his ministry. What does this pattern teach us about the relationship between prayer and action? How can we integrate this practice of prayer into our personal lives and communal church activities in the new year?
4. Jesus, though divine, relied on the Holy Spirit for strength and guidance. How does this challenge our understanding of dependence on God? In what areas of our lives do we need to rely more on the Holy Spirit for spiritual stamina and discernment?
5. Reflecting on Isaiah 43 and the voice from heaven in Luke 3, what do these passages teach us about our identity and value in God's eyes? How can embracing this affirmation transform the way we view ourselves and others within our community?
6. The sermon emphasised being "apprentices of Jesus," growing to emulate him. What practical steps can we take to grow in this way, both individually and as a church? How can we cultivate a community that reflects Christ's love and inclusivity, while also encouraging spiritual growth?