

Lord Jesus, help us to discover the power of love and forgiveness sin our own lives. Amen.

- Well, nativity plays never go quite as you hope they might. You probably know the story of the disgruntled child who was given the part of first innkeeper but thought he deserved something more major. When Mary and Joseph started knocking on doors in Bethlehem he rather scuppered the whole thing . Joseph said, “Have you got any room?” He opened his arms wide, smiled, and said “Yes, come on in, you can have the best bedroom.”
- There are lots of lines in today’s play that I liked, and I loved the beautiful singing and acting, but what I liked most of all in today’s play was the sense that you don’t have to be anyone special. Jesus was sent by God to show how much he loves all of us
 - What even me?
 - Yes, even you!
- Sometimes when we think we’re not coping very well, when the pressures start mounting and tempers as parents start getting frayed, it’s very easy to turn your back on Jesus and think ‘I just haven’t got the energy.’
 - But if you believe that love is bigger than stress, and forgiveness more long lasting than frustration ...
 - If you think that compassion is more powerful than merely protecting yourself and trust more generous than suspicion ...
 - Then Jesus is the best way I know to hold onto those truths when the world at large is hurtling forward out of control
 - And yes, Jesus shows that God loves even us, at the end of a bad day, when we’ve shouted at the baby, kicked the cat and forgotten to buy the sausage meat.
- But just like President Trump and his lawyer, he does require us to own up to the truth of who we are and how we need his help to love ourselves, let alone each other.
- I don’t know what you made of the miscellany of animals at the stable. We are probably unique in the whole world in having a standard poodle in the story. I’ve searched the bible and can’t find any trace of it anywhere.
- What the animals say to me is the truth that God values his creation and Jesus is his plan to redeem the whole world and transform it back to the perfection he first created it to be
 - Perhaps that’s part of the message of the manger in the stable rather than the bed in the inn.
- The hope that one day the appalling sacrilege of war in Yemen and climate change induced drought in Sudan will be removed. Justice will have been done.
 - The scary thing is that we are implicated in all this.
 - For change to happen, for peace and justice to result, for the threat of climate change to be removed, we all have to change our attitudes, our reactions, our way of life.
- Christian faith says that coming to Jesus as we are, knowing we need to change but not knowing how to, is the best way, in fact the only way, to start this process happening.
 - And if we are to be involved, it can only begin with us.
- I’m delighted that you are all here today and hope that some of the challenge and the hope of the story of Jesus has rubbed off on you. That you will make your own journey to the stable and have the courage and the honesty to ask him to accept your gift of yourself and help you to change through his irrepressible love and trust in you.
 - We plan to have a series of events like this, where the whole Church community gathers together, over the next year, and we aim to discover a greater understanding of what the love of Jesus really means.
 - Will you pray with me that together we will we will be able to make this journey? Amen!