



JOURNEYING THROUGH LENT

5 WEEKS
IN LENT

A short course exploring scripture and deepening our relationship with God through Lent.

Introduction

Welcome to this Lent course. The hope is that it will help you to deepen your relationship with God as you explore some of the themes of Lent. There is a theme for each week and a daily scripture reading. Take 5 or 10 minutes each day to read the verses, ask God what he would like you to learn from them and try and take time not only to talk to him but listen too.

There is space in this booklet to jot down notes as you go along.

We will then meet together weekly in our group/s to discuss what we have found, there are some questions to prompt your thoughts and discussion but take time to listen to God to see if he wants to take you in another direction.

Above all this is a time for you to spend with God who desires to meet with you as much as you desire to meet with him.

I hope and pray that this course will be a blessing to you as you spend time with God this Lent.

Every blessing, Sherine Angus

Lent 1 – The Wilderness

This week's study is on the wilderness, which after a year of lockdowns and restrictions is perhaps a good description of how things have been. During the week spend some time, 5 or 10 minutes a day reading through a different verse on wilderness each day. Take time to reflect on what the words mean, where are you drawn? How do they affect you? How do they relate to your life or the world around you?

Day 1: Mark 1: 9-13

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Day 2: Jeremiah 2:6

"They did not say, 'Where is the Lord
Who brought us up out of the land of Egypt,
Who led us through the wilderness,
Through a land of deserts and of pits,
Through a land of drought and of deep darkness,
Through a land that no one crossed
And where no man dwelt?'

Day 3: Isaiah 40:3-5

A voice is calling,
"Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness;
Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.
"Let every valley be lifted up,

And every mountain and hill be made low;
And let the rough ground become a plain,
And the rugged terrain a broad valley;
Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed,
And all flesh will see it together;
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Day 4: Matthew 3:3

For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said,
“The voice of one crying in the wilderness,
‘Make ready the way of the Lord,
Make His paths straight!’”

Day 5: Exodus 3:18

They will pay heed to what you say; and you with the elders of Israel will come to the king of Egypt and you will say to him, ‘The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. So now, please, let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.’

Day 6: Ezekiel 20:10

So I took them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness.

Day 7: Deuteronomy 2:7

For the Lord your God has blessed you in all that you have done; He has known your wanderings through this great wilderness. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you; you have not lacked a thing.”

The word wilderness brings to mind vivid images, how do you imagine the wilderness? Think of both negative and positive things that come to mind.

During our lives we all have times that might be described as wilderness times, where was God during those times in your life? What did you find helpful during those times? What made them more difficult?

Throughout the Bible wilderness is mentioned. It can be a place where voices call out that are different from the way society lives, as in the case of John the Baptist. Who and where do we hear the voices in the wilderness today?

Wilderness is also a time to get away from normal every day life and find space with God. Where do you go to find time with God? What do you find helps, what do you find hinders?

Wilderness is often used in the Bible as a space between things happening. For Jesus, it was a time after the wonderful event of his baptism and before he began his ministry, for the Israelites it was time between leaving slavery in Egypt and entering the promised land. We are often impatient to move onto the next thing in life, struggling to wait and bide our time. Yet, God's timing is perfect despite our desire to hurry and rush. This time of lockdowns and restrictions during the pandemic could be described as a wilderness time. What do you think God is wanting us to learn from this time? What have you learnt during this time? How has the wilderness benefitted you, how has it hindered you?

When we meet we will listen to this song

<https://youtu.be/fDvqgQi-QDM>

The lyrics in the song state that we are made 'for light and wilderness'. What do you think that means? What does it mean to you and the way you live your life?

Having thought about the wilderness, have your thoughts changed? What do you think are the positives and what are the negatives? What will you take away from this week?

Lent 2 – Take up your cross

This week we think about taking up the cross – choosing what appears to be the hard road, seeing the dangers ahead, but recognising that that is what God is calling us to do. As before, read a different verse each day. What is God saying to you through it?

Day 1: Mark 8.34-36

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?

Day 2: Mark 8.31-33

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

Day 3: Ruth 1.16-17

Ruth said, 'Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you!

Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die -there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!'

Day 4: Luke 1.30-31, 38

The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ... Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'

Day 5: John 12.24-25

Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Matthew 26.39

And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.'

Day 7: 1 Corinthians 1.18-19, 21

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.'

Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe.

The dictionary definition of sacrifice is: something important or precious that is given up for the sake of gaining something or allowing something to happen that is considered more important, as in I had to work hard and make a lot of sacrifices to achieve success.

Life is full of decisions. Are there times in your life where you have deliberately chosen a hard path to tread? What drove you to that decision and how do you feel now that you look back at it? Did other people challenge you and question your decision?

Or perhaps circumstances took you on a path you would not have chosen. How did it change your life? Do you see it as a sacrifice?

When we meet we will listen to this song, **I will offer up my life**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWP05Fm39sY&ab_channel=CassieThompson

What does the word 'sacrifice' conjure up for you? Are there people in your past who have made sacrifices for you?

Lent 3 – Where God Dwells

Day 1 – John 2: 19-22

Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ 20 The Jews then said, ‘This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?’ 21 But he was speaking of the temple of his body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Day 2 - 1 Corinthians 3: 6-17

Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.

Day 3 - 2 Corinthians 6: 16

What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,
‘I will live in them and walk among them,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.

Day 4 - Hebrews 3: 6

Christ, however, was faithful over God’s house as a son, and we are his house if we hold firm the confidence and the pride that belong to hope.

Day 5 - 2 Ephesians 19-22

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and

grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.

Day 6 - 2 Peter 5

like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

When Jesus came he broke the old covenant and became the new. God no longer dwelt in the temple, only accessible by the priest on certain holy days. Instead God was the temple, accessible and available to us all.

Many of the readings talk about us as a body becoming the temple or house of God, being a holy priesthood and joining together. What does this bring to mind? Do you think we do this already? How do you think we could improve?

When we think of ourselves as God's temple, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit does this change how you act or think? Do you think it should? How do you think living as a temple of God is evident in your life?

It is incredible to think that God has chosen us as his dwelling place, knowing that he is aware of all our imperfections, the things we get wrong, the way we behave, yet still he chooses to dwell in and with us. Does knowing this change the way you relate to God? Is there a way that it could deepen your relationship with God, knowing that he has chosen to dwell in you?

Through Jesus we have direct access to God in a way that those in the Old Testament could not. Take time to think about this privilege that we are given and how this gift might change how you live your life?

As a church community we each have a part to play as the stones of the temple, the body of Christ, yet we often get caught up in our own desires and needs as individuals. How do you think we could work more closely together to bring the gift of God into our wider communities?

The music today talks of God as our dwelling place using the words of Psalm 91. <https://youtu.be/rvQGzTqoOV0> We all have times when we feel closer to God and use God as our refuge and other times when he seems further away. How could you deepen your trust in God as your refuge?

Lent 4 – Dying to Christ

Day 1 - John 12: 24-25

Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Day 2 - John 11: 25-26

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

Day 3 - John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Day 4 - Matthew 16:24-25

Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

Day 5 - 1 Peter 1: 23-25

You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.

Day 6 - Philippians 1: 21-23

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell.

I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

Day 7 - 1 Corinthians 15: 42-44

So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

To hear that by dying we can gain new life seems like a difficult thing to hear. What do you understand by that?

To die to Christ suggests surrendering all that we have and all that we are to God, this is not a half-hearted commitment. To do so is to live in a way that is contrary to the way of the world, what things do you find prevent you from living wholeheartedly for God?

What do you think are the benefits and blessings of surrendering to God and following Jesus? Where have you found those blessings in your own life?

When we meet we will listen to this piece of music:
<https://youtu.be/zundjUFazfg> 'Yet Not I, But Through Christ in Me'.
The lyrics explain how death has been overcome and we can sing 'we are free'. We often forget the freedom that we find in Christ and instead focus on things that may seem negative. How do you think we can begin to experience more of the freedom that is promised to us

through living in Christ? How have you experienced freedom through living in Christ?

Having thought about dying to the old and becoming new in Christ this week, what has challenged you? What have you learnt? Are there things that you will change or things that will remain the same?

Lent 5 Forgiven and Set Free

Day 1: Luke 19. 37-38

The whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!'

Day 2: Luke 19. 45-46

Then he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling things there; and he said, 'It is written, "My house shall be a house of prayer"; but you have made it a den of robbers.'

Day 3: Luke 23.24

Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.'

Day 4: Mark 14.17

When it was evening, he came with the twelve. And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.' They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, 'Surely, not I?'

Day 5: John 14. 1-3

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.'

Day 6: Matthew 26.39

And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.'

Day 7: John 19.28-30

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

As we read the story of Holy Week, which begins with huge celebrations as Jesus entered into Jerusalem but quickly turns into the dark final journey to the cross, we can catch glimpses of the amazing grace that comes to each of us.

Imagine that you heard that Jesus was coming down Miles Cross Hill towards Alford. How would you feel? What would you do?

In the temple Jesus finally allowed his frustration and anger to come to the surface. What situations in the world today make you angry? When is it right to be angry?

It is easy to deny our own weaknesses. What actions and attitudes do you have that need God's forgiveness?

Jesus told his disciples that one of them would betray him. It made them all think! And then he told Peter that he would deny him three times, and all the disciples reacted in horror, but of course when the going got really tough, they all deserted him. What tempts you to take the easy way out to avoid confrontation?

The Passover was a celebration of the Jews being set free from captivity. Are there things that hold you captive and prevent you from having freedom in Christ?

Jesus makes it clear that he will be opening the door to a new future where all can follow him. That death and suffering are not the end. What does this mean to you?

Why is Good Friday good?

We will listen to the gospel hymn Amazing Grace, as a time to reflect on the freedom that we have in God.

<https://youtu.be/Obp-9BEZe1c>