

Worship At Home

6th March 2022

On the first Sunday in Lent we gather,
we come to remember and
celebrate the good news of Jesus,
who came to reveal God's love
and who invites us to walk in his way.
We come as we are,
beloved children,
to worship God.
Let us come close to God,
as God comes close to us.



Loving God,

we come to you today with many question and secretly wondering what is going on in our world. Do we have to choose? How do we make impossible choices? What do you want from us? Can you help us to get there?

Thank you for Jesus, who was so close to you that he knew exactly how you wanted him to live and what would get in the way.

But that does not mean that it was easy for him to make the choices that he did.

Help us to follow his example, and to start by getting to know you so well that when the time comes for us to make hard choices, we will know which way is best, and know that you are with us. **Amen.**

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - CH4 540 I heard the voice of Jesus say

1 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto me and rest;
lay down, O weary one,
lay down your head upon my breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
so weary, worn, and sad;
I found in him a resting place,
and he has made me glad.

2 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold, I freely give
the living water, thirsty one;
stoop down and drink and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream;
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live in him.

3 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"I am this dark world's light.
Look unto me; your morn shall rise
and all your day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in him my star, my sun;
and in that light of life I'll walk
till travelling days are done.



CCL 1160072

<https://youtu.be/CfhmRj0nWFE>

Let us pray together

Eternal God, unfathomable mystery, so different and seemingly distant from us and yet familiar too, for we are made of the same essence. Our lives are part of your life in the world; our destiny, so far as we can understand it, is to live in this world by the values of your kingdom, working and praying for a time when there will be no distance between them, for all shall be well and all shall be one.

But in the meantime, O God, we have to worship you, as it seems, from afar, and that can be hard. Hard enough to know how to reach you and what to say; harder still to know which of

the many voices in our heads is coming from you. And then, trickiest of all, how to be sure that we are living in a way that furthers the cause of your kingdom and does not work against it.

Living God, as the season of Lent begins, may we take time to reassess, as Jesus did, where our lives are heading, and what may need to change. Are we working for the wrong goals? Have we got sucked into believing that money or success, fame or even family will fill the empty spaces inside? Are we worshipping you, and you alone, or are our words saying one thing and our actions another?

And if there are gaps, as certainly there will be, between what we want and what you want for us, may we not waste time feeling guilty, but get on with doing better from now on. Bring to our minds the words of scripture that will help us; put us in touch with others who can be our companions on the way; and, above all, fill us with your spirit of grace and truth, generosity and joy as we continue our journey of discipleship, following Jesus wherever his way may lead, knowing that he will be with us to the end. **Amen.**

Reading: Luke 4:1-13

Reflection: Desert Living

At Christmas/New Year we recorded the new adaptation by David Tennant of *Around the world in 80 days*. You may have seen it. In the 3rd episode they foolhardily try to cross the Yemen desert. The landscape is empty, only the fierce furnace of the sun blazes mercilessly on the scorched land. All life has scuttled for sanctuary among the crevices of the rocks or lies up in the hollows of the dried-up watercourses waiting for the cooling breeze of evening. From watching this episode, you can get a real feeling for what it must have been like for Jesus in the desert at the mercy of the Devil's temptations.



So, as we look in on Jesus in the wilderness, we can understand the harsh fear and confusion, the hard bed of stones that brings no comfort. Imagine forty days without the smell of grass or flower. Jesus' feet cut raw against the ragged paths, as he searches for water and is driven to collect the morning dew from the rocks. I imagine him counting the days by the size of the moon, and feeling dazed by the infinity of night, an indigo canvas pricked by silver stars that stretches for ever and never reaches an answer. On a human level I imagine his mouth has grown foul, and his breath stinks for there has been no chance to wash for weeks and there is grit beneath his nails, he digs holes in the sand. And here we are, wrapped in our warm blankets, fully heated homes and hot dinners at appropriate times during the day, in contrast while Jesus' teeth chattering as he rolls himself in his cloak at night.

He's hungry, thirsty, and tired. Yet he sits down and rests, his eyes fixed on a jumbled heap of boulders shaped like round loaves of bread. They remind him of his hunger. 'Turn them into loaves,' comes the whisper. 'You are starving, satisfy your hunger. Are you not God's Son?' He looks up, as if seeing someone before him, yet he appears to be alone. 'That's what the voice said at your baptism,' continues the questioner. 'You are my Son - or was that just a trick of the brain or an illusion? Perhaps you are not whom you imagine yourself to be, but just an ordinary wood worker infected with religious fervour.'



Prove that I'm wrong. If you do succeed, it will win you a lot of votes. There is a lot of hunger in the world. Millions are starving. And even if you do believe in yourself, then turning stones into bread will convince the atheists and the sceptics. Go on, turn them into loaves!' Looking again at the rocks and he shakes his head. 'No! It is written no-one lives by bread alone.'



Undaunted the voice continues: 'Come with me to a mountaintop - a holy place. For did not Abraham, Moses and Elijah have mountaintop experiences, moments of vision? I too can give you visions. Stand with me on the roof of the world and see your destiny. You are made of finer stuff; you are made to wield power, to exercise authority. Before you kings will bow, and emperors will pay you homage. Look! This is the world.' 'It is yours,' says the voice. 'I give it to you and

all its glory. All I ask is that you acknowledge me; that you call me your Lord, and you shall have it now. What is your answer?'

Gazing down again. But, instead of the world below, he sees a man wearing a crown of thorns and a purple robe, mocked and buffeted by jeering soldiers. Has Jesus glimpsed a vision of the future? He looks into the tormented face of a crucified man and finds his own eyes staring back at him. He stands upright and says with gritted teeth: 'Depart from me. For Scripture says, "Worship the Lord your God and serve only him."'



'Come with me,' the voice persists. 'I want you to see something.

I will take you to the Temple. There's nothing wrong with a visit to your Father's house, is there? Tell you what - we needn't even leave the desert. Let me open up your imagination. We've entered the main gate and have gone through the courts into the Holy Place. Now we are in the Temple itself and have climbed to the roof at its highest point. Don't look down - it's a long drop! But I'm forgetting; you are God's Son. You lead a charmed life. Jump! It's okay. You can depend on your Father! Doesn't the Scripture say that his angels will protect you, lest you strike your foot on a rock? It's quite safe. Think of the entertainment value, think of the draw that a miracle will have. Once you have gathered the crowd by this stunt they will hang upon your words. So, jump!

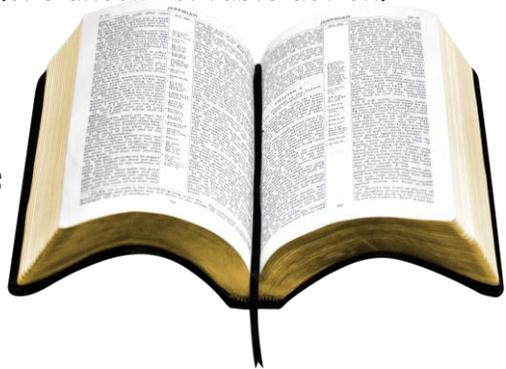
Looking down and up again, he shakes his head once more: 'I see you know your Bible,' he replies, 'yet that does not surprise me. But let me give you another text that will put this suggestion beyond argument: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."'

The voice was silent. As the sun begins to set, a cool breeze springs up, seeming to whisper, 'Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

This Lent fast and experience what Jesus underwent. Become more disciplined by learning to do without some of our luxuries is not a bad activity. Jesus showed us that there is no living without pain, that prayer can be a bitter struggle and decision making can become a nightmare of temptation.

This lent consider what a difference it would make in our lives if we resisted the temptations that faced Jesus - the temptation to easy power, the temptation for easy living, the temptation to easy fame. Consider how easy your life is, and how rarely if given the choice you accept the more difficult route, the harder task, the more uncomfortable action.

How do you make decisions in your life? When faced with tempting possibilities, do you reach for the Bible to help you and give advice? DO you know your Bible well enough for answers to spring readily to mind? For all Jesus' replies to the devil are direct quotes from Deuteronomy. Jesus was so steeped in his faith, and so educated in his religion, that he had swift access to the wisdom of their words. What can you do this Lent to make your life simpler and to take your living closer to a live lived as Jesus calls us to.



Lord, As we enter the season of Lent and reflect on the sadness of its story; when we look into our own hearts and struggle to live by the responsibilities of our Christian calling. When we feel lost and alone; when trouble comes to our doors, and we do not know how to face the future. When church needs to change; when the way ahead seems threatening and unknown, and the usual certainties are gone.

When we are lured by power, money and control; and we no longer know what is true. When our dreams and relationships lie shattered by conflict, circumstance or cruelty and we place our trust in what cannot fulfil us.

When the work of peace is interrupted by the work of war. When more of our lives is about what divides us than on the unity we seek.

When children are killed in adult wars; when cities are full of marching boots; when there is blood on the ground and the sounds of play are silenced.

When we look at cities that lie deserted; when citizens flee in fear for their lives and our enemies encircle us. When we take more than we should; when we do not treat the earth with kindness and our habits and choices create a wasteland.

When we find it hard to follow you; when easier pathways beckon and our strength fails.

When we look ahead, and all is dark: send us light. When our hearts are dry, our pathway full of ash and dust, send us water to renew our souls.

May we know your Spirit's comfort and trust that your love is enough. In the darkness that surrounds us and the pain that is to come, until we see you face to face: God of life, Lead us through the wilderness. **Amen.**

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - CH4 511 Thy hand, O God, has guided

- 1 Your hand, O God, has guided your flock from age to age;
your faithfulness is written on history's open page.
Our fathers owned your goodness, and we their deeds record;
and both to this bear witness: one church, one faith, one Lord!
- 2 Your heralds brought the gospel to greatest and the least;
they summoned men and women to share the great King's feast.
And this was all their teaching in every deed and word,
to all alike proclaiming: one church, one faith, one Lord!
- 3 Through many a day of darkness, through many a scene of strife,
the faithful few fought bravely to guard the nation's life.
Their Gospel of redemption, sin pardoned, life restored,
was all in this enfolded: one Church, one Faith, one Lord.
- 4 Your mercy will not fail us nor leave your work undone;
with your right hand to help us the victory shall be won.
And then by earth and heaven your name shall be adored;
and this shall be our anthem: one church, one faith, one Lord!

CCL 1160072

<https://youtu.be/esJ7WWqG-dI>

Lord Jesus, may we see you more clearly, love you more dearly and follow you more nearly day by day.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all evermore. **Amen.**

Thank you to those who have taken the time to contact me. Take care out there this week. May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you this day and each day.

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If you choose to email me, please can you tell me who you are and where you live. Thank you. 4