

## Lent Reflection Week 2- Isolation

*Mark 1:9-15:*

*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.*

*Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."*

Reflection- Forty days in the wilderness. As a nation we have been under some form of COVID-19 related restrictions for 340 days as of today Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Three hundred and forty days of non-normality. Almost of year of separation from our loved ones, of mask wearing, sanitizer using, social distancing... It seems that there may be a return to normality on the horizon! However that may not ease our struggle with restrictions at present.

Our reading tells us that Christ went out into the wilderness to be tempted. He fasted for 40days and 40nights, he was alone in the wilderness needing to sleep and live there. For me, this time in the wilderness that Jesus experiences has taken on a new and different significance for me this year. I know that I am so fortunate to have people in my home to speak to, to have the technology to connect with my friends and family but still I find the idea of a time of wilderness and isolation something my soul connects to all too easily.

How have you found this time of restriction and change? Has it felt like a time of being cast away-separated from your usual comforts and companions? Have you found a disruption to your sleeping patterns, your eating patterns...? Perhaps you have had to face recognition of your own vulnerabilities. Surely Jesus would have faced all these things too. Not only being tempted to betray his Father but also needing to sleep in the wilderness, to be separated from his disciples, to be distance from familiar surroundings. He was isolated yet not alone because of God's presence with him.

We may be isolated, but we are not alone because of God's presence with us. Lockdown may feel like a time of wilderness to us and if so, can we embrace this as Christ did? We see Jesus survive the wilderness being tended to by Angels, resisting temptation and spend time in prayer with his Father. During Lent can we use the time we have as lockdown begins to ease to embrace spending time with God, can we when we feel alone or overwhelmed turn to God. Even a moment at a time... When we find our situation difficult can we try to take a deep breath and ask God to make his presence known to us... Perhaps to use the prayer 'You are here God and I am with You' or 'Here I am Lord.'

Whilst angels may not come to tend to you during your experience perhaps you are able to appreciate what is being done for you? Those who work for the NHS, those who have help you in particular keeping in touch, bringing shopping etc. God works through his people and even a passing smile or signing a note off 'Love From' can make biggest difference to our days. Can you spend this time being thankful for those people? Thanking them. Being them to those around you.

And can we resist the sense of wilderness overwhelming us. It's okay not to be okay. But it is also okay to reach out for help. Do be in touch with the ministry team, with me, or a friend or family member if you are feeling overwhelmed.

We are in our own time of isolation and wilderness let us strive to thrive and grow through it as Jesus did. Amen.

*Time of reflection and meditation on this theme-*