

LENT reflections

WEEK 1

Commencing 9th March 2020

Read Psalm 27

Look for Him and wait for Him. WE have to work at looking for God. Isn't he always available, why do we have to work hard at looking for Him?

God does not put himself about as a mere item of curiosity, so that anyone can pop in and glance at him and then walk away. No! You have to go looking for him, so that when you find him you know you're in his presence.

It's a great thing to enjoy a demanding and challenging ... but also a warming and healing ... presence that gives you the strength that you need.

And looking for him takes time, you have to "wait" as well as look.

So often today we want immediate results; we want it **now!** This demand for "instant" damages not only human relationships but also our relationship with God.

Looking for and waiting for God are important, and not least because we are surrounded by enemies. We might wonder why we don't thank God for our friends, instead of worrying about people being out to get us.

“ So often today we want immediate results; we want it **NOW!** ”

Part of the answer is that the original Psalmist David spent much of his life surrounded by all sorts of enemies: Philistines, Saul and his followers, and other foreign nations, but David's experience acts as a signpost to the fact that anyone who wants to seek God, and to wait for him, will face struggles of various kinds.

Sometimes others will resent what you are doing ... even in a free society. Then there are the other enemies: the excusing and wheedling and mocking voices within our own heads and our hearts. These often become just a bit louder when in Lent we look to seek God and to wait for him.

Start a journal during Lent.

What do you hope to achieve this Lent?

How do you think you might best take time to look and wait for God?

Who might you find it helpful to share with ... to encourage this Lent?

What have you found hard this week.? Any surprises?

My notes:

LENT reflections

WEEK 2

Commencing
16th March 2020

**It's worth the effort!
Psalm 62 verses 1 - 8**

It should be getting tough
by now. ..Is it?

This psalm brings us, in hearts and minds, into God's temple, the sanctuary in Jerusalem. That's where the Psalmist remembers looking upon God and beholding His power and glory.

In the Old Testament the Temple was a physical place.
In the New Testament, Jesus himself identifies as the true Temple, the place on earth where the living God dwells with his people, revealing his power and glory.

As we read Old Testament passages that refer to the Temple we can see them as pointing towards Jesus.

Perhaps you can spend some time looking up some other references?....

References:

**“ We are being
God's Temple ... the
place that God fills
with His presence. ”**

There is a second sense in which the temple becomes human in the New Testament.

By the Holy Spirit , we ourselves ,who follow Jesus and recognise him as the human face of the living God -are called to be “a Holy Temple in the Lord”.

“ a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2v 21-22)

When we meet together as Christians ..and we are consciously living as part of the family of Jesus' people, it is so much more than just supporting each other.

We are being God's Temple ... the place that God fills with His presence, in advance of the time when He will fill the whole world with His love and renewing, healing power.
(Ephesians 1 v 23)

Read and re-read the psalm until you realise that actually it's God's right hand that is holding on to you.

My notes:

LENT reflections

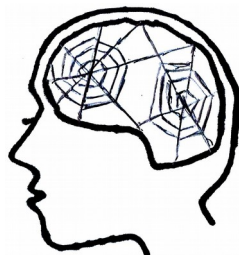
WEEK 3

Commencing
23rd March 2020

Forgiveness Psalm 32

If you have read InterMISSION for March you will have seen the challenge on the cover to spring clean.

Not just your home..., but to go looking into the dark corners of your heart and mind and life, to see where the dust has been getting in, where cobwebs have settled, ...
Areas of your life... that need tidying up..



Passages of scripture like Psalm 32 remind you how worthwhile it is.....

Whatever grubby corners you come across can be cleaned and made into places of beauty.

Refusing to confess sin really does cramp your style- spiritually, psychologically and even physically. AND... when the room is swept and clean, the furniture can be rearranged and the room might even be used for different purposes.

God's forgiveness is not merely to wipe your slate clean. It is to guide you and me into new areas, tasks and callings, that we have always had the potential for... but weren't quite ready for.

“ Wouldn't it be great if across our fellowship ... people were rearranging their lives ! ”

Wouldn't it be great, if across our fellowship this Lent, people were rearranging their lives!

Lent is about two closely linked things, forgiveness and calling. Vocations that flow directly from the healing and forgiving love of God.

Without that forgiveness, we would just be arrogant, imagining that we can sign up to work for God's kingdom in **our own** power and goodness..

We often think of confessing as a rather dreary embarrassing thing, forgetting what a joy it is to know that we are “ ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven.”

Q:
Is there something this Lent that you need to put behind you?

My notes:

LENT reflections

WEEK 4

Commencing
30th March 2020

Fortunes turned around
Psalm 126

**“ The unfinished work
of restoration and
rebuilding. There are
still jobs to complete. ”**

We all know that Life has its ups and downs .

It's easy to be cheerful and enthusiastic when things are going well, but how do we respond when they aren't.what if those difficult times just seem to last and last??
Especially if the past seemed so much better.

At the beginning in the Book of Genesis, God promises to bless Abraham and his descendants. A promise is also made to Jacob and his descendants . These promises could seem fulfilled in prosperous times when David and then Solomon were King.

Those times had long past, the people had been captured and led off into captivity and exile and this situation was going on and on...

Then there is a new King.. the exile is over .at last ...the Judeans are to return home! Now it's time for a new song.
Restoration..forgiveness..a new start

The psalm moves on further.. and the situation now is :- the unfinished work of restoration and rebuilding. There are still jobs to complete .. The cry is "Do it again gracious Lord".

FOR REFLECTION

As we go through Lent, I wonder which part of the sequence you identify with now?

Good times? Exile? Fresh opportunities?

Work still to do?

Make a note of it ... and pray it through this week.

Jesus made that story his own too, speaking of seeds being sadly and strangely sown so that a great harvest might come up.

My notes:

LENT reflections

WEEK 5
Holy Week
commencing
6th April 2020

The cost of love
Psalm 31 verses 9 -16

**“ Hold before our loving God
all those around the world
who are in one or more of
those miseries right now. ”**

We talk of the God of love... how Jesus is love. Which is of course right ... but true love comes at a cost ... it is sacrificial.

As we enter Holy Week, we recall the pain both physical, emotional and spiritual that Jesus went through to become our Saviour.

Jesus is not the only one who has suffered. Many, many have, and indeed still do today. In the Psalms, the writer is in the pit of despair. This psalm contains the honesty of both despair and complaint. Yet through it there is still a trust and turning to God.

As we read v9,10 there is physical weakness and great sadness.
V11 ~ and 12 the writer is alone , isolated and scorned..
V13 ~ the situation seems worse with plots to kill.

Let us pause here for a moment. In our prayer today; alongside the prayer of Jesus as he goes to the cross; hold before our loving God all those around the world who are in one or more of those miseries right now.

There is so much misery: to poor, those in prison, or in a desolate place where their life is at risk. Those who daily go about their lives not knowing if a bomb, a knife or a shell will be the end of them.

As we collect our thoughts of people around the world and maybe people close to us, family, friends and neighbours ... we pause ... and then move onto the final 3 verses.

They can become a prayer not just for ourselves, but for all God's people... the whole of humanity and indeed for the whole of creation.

Jesus went to the cross to draw all people to himself and to break through the barrier of decay, despair and death and so to bring about the new purposes of the creator God for the whole world. We can trust this God, the God who we know in Jesus.

Our times are in his hand.

My notes: