

# **Journeying Towards Easter**

## **An Ash Wednesday Service**

### **A Call to Worship**

- Lent is a time of repentance and sacrifice in preparation for Easter.
- Lent is a period of 40 weekdays from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday.
- Lent lasts for 40 days in the western churches and eight weeks in the Eastern Church. In the Early Church, it was the time when new Christians received intensive preparation for their baptism at Easter.
- Lent is a time of lengthening days, and reflects the old English word for 'spring'.
- Lent is a time of inward reflection and repentance from sin.
- The colour used to remind us of these ideas is purple.

### **An Introduction and Welcome from Rev Suzie Allen**

#### **Thoughts from Jesus**

Where did my journey begin? In my mother's womb or at my birth? Or as a child asking questions in the Temple? Or as a young man listening to my cousin John? Some will say it was when John baptised me and a voice from heaven was heard.

Wherever, whenever it began, I found myself led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness. I had been without food for 40 days and nights and I was famished! If I was the 'Son of God', could I command the stones to turn into bread? Why not? Because I knew what was written in scripture: 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

Then it came to me, if I really was the Son of God and I stood on the very top of the Temple and jumped, surely God would save me? No, not a good

choice. Why not? Because it is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'

Then came the persuasive thought that all the power and splendour in the world could be mine. But I would not be tempted by those devilish thoughts, for it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.' Maybe my journey really began when I decided to be a servant king.

### **Song** - The Servant King

From heav'n You came, helpless  
Babe,  
Entered our world, Your glory  
veiled;  
Not to be served but to serve,  
And give Your life that we might  
live.

*This is our God, the Servant  
King,  
He calls us now to follow Him,  
To bring our lives as a daily  
offering  
Of worship to the Servant King.*

There in the garden of tears,  
My heavy load He chose to bear;  
His heart with sorrow was torn,  
'Yet not my will but Yours,' He  
said.

Come see His hands and His feet,  
The scars that speak of sacrifice;  
Hands that flung stars into space  
To cruel nails surrendered.

So let us learn how to serve,  
And in our lives enthrone Him;  
Each other's needs to prefer,  
For it is Christ we're serving.

Graham Kendrick  
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### **Bible reading** - Matthew 4.12-17

#### **Thoughts from Peter**

Where did my journey with Jesus begin? I was fishing on the Sea of Galilee when he called: 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.' Immediately my brother and I left our nets and followed him. I travelled in his company and listened to him speaking to the crowds; teaching and curing every disease and sickness. But perhaps the real turning point was when Jesus came to my house and saw my mother-in-law lying in bed

with a fever. He just touched her hand and the fever left her. Then she began to serve food as if nothing had happened. After that what could I do but follow him? I would walk on water to follow him! In the past I have been known to speak out of turn but I will never disown or speak ill of Jesus, no – never!

### **A Prayer of Confession**

**All:**

**Lord Jesus Christ, you were betrayed, insulted and let down by those closest to you. We, too, have betrayed people when we have not spoken out against injustice we have seen. We, too, have insulted people, when we have hurt others by what we have said or done. We, too, have let down loved ones. And we have let you down by forgetting to live as your children. For betrayals and insults, forgive us; for letting you down, forgive us. Hear our words and let us journey on in the knowledge of your forgiving peace.**

**Amen.**

**Bible reading** - Matthew 9.10-13

### **Thoughts from Mary Magdalene**

I suppose I first came across Jesus when he sailed across the lake to Magdala, my home town. It was after Jesus had fed all those people and I expect all he wanted was peace and quiet. Well you do not get much of that when you meet someone who has seven demons inside them. (Yes, that was me.) Jesus cast out my demons and I became one of his followers. We went through towns and cities together as he proclaimed the good news to everyone - the same good news that had even changed someone like me. I travel everywhere with Jesus, taking care of him for, you see, he rarely thinks about himself, it is always other people. Sometimes I think that might be the death of him, but you know, even if he died, I do not think I will ever be separated from his love.

## Thoughts from Mary the Mother of Jesus

Where does a mother's journey begin? Was it as a young woman, engaged to Joseph, when I became pregnant by the Holy Spirit? Or when Joseph wanted to get rid of me, until an angel told him I would have a son whom we were to name Jesus? Was it at the birth or the arrival of those wise men with their wonderful yet disturbing gifts? Was it when we had to flee to Egypt or was it watching my children growing up and becoming independent? Perhaps a mother's journey is experiencing the pain of letting go, of loving someone so much but yet accepting you can no longer heal all their wounds. For the world out there can be one of love and friendship but it can also be a place of pain and betrayal.

### Song – Lord Jesus Christ

Lord Jesus Christ you have come  
to us  
You are one with us, Mary's Son.  
Cleansing our souls from all their  
sin  
pouring Your love and goodness  
in  
Jesus our love for you we sing,  
living Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ now and every  
day  
Teach us how to pray, Son of  
God.  
You have commanded us to do  
this in remembrance Lord of you  
Into our lives your power breaks  
through,  
living Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ, you have come  
to us  
Born as one of us, Mary's Son.  
Led out to die on Calvary,  
risen from death to set us free,  
living Lord Jesus help us see  
You are Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ I would come to  
you  
live my life for you, Son of God.  
All your commands I know are  
true,  
your many gifts will make me  
new,  
into our lives your power breaks  
through,  
living Lord.

## **Prayers of Intercession** by Rev Bill French

### **Thoughts from Thomas**

My journey is one that takes a few twists and turns. It certainly made me ask a question or two. All the time I travelled with Jesus I heard questions asked by scribes, Pharisees, rich and poor, sick and lame, as well as the Twelve. I felt things were drawing to a dangerous end when Jesus raised Lazarus at Bethany, then planned to travel to Jerusalem. I said, 'Let us go there that we may die with him.' And we did, at least hesitantly, follow him there. A few days later, during the Passover meal, Jesus was talking about going to prepare a place for us in his Father's house. I had no idea then what he meant. 'Lord, how do we know where you are going, how can we know the way?' Jesus said he was 'The Way'! I still have my doubts, but I think I will stick around. I can't put my finger on it, but something still troubles me.

### **A Reflection** given by Rev Nigel Deller

#### **Jesus**

Our journeys began in different ways and in different places. We all journeyed with differing expectations.

#### **Peter**

Some of us wanted the overthrowing of Rome, others the end of illness or disease.

#### **Mary Magdalene**

Some of us came to listen, hearing what we least expected. Some heard the good news that they had waited for all their lives.

## **Thomas**

Some of us came with questions: we wanted answers but we got more questions instead. Others found the answer to their deepest needs.

## **Mary the Mother of Jesus**

I suppose that is what we all learn when we journey with Jesus. We are each unique and God speaks to us according to our needs.

## **A Closing Prayer**

Lent is a journey. Let us travel with the blessing of God. Let us travel on in the fellowship of the Spirit. Let us travel always with the love of Jesus the Son.

**Amen .**

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## **Song** – As the Deer Pants

As the deer pants for the water,  
So my soul longs after You.  
You alone are my heart's desire  
And I long to worship You.

*You alone are my strength, my  
shield,  
To You alone may my spirit  
yield.  
You alone are my heart's desire  
And I long to worship You.*

I want You more than gold or  
silver,  
Only You can satisfy.  
You alone are the real joy-giver  
And the apple of my eye.

You're my Friend and You are my  
Brother,  
Even though You are a King.  
I love You more than any other,  
So much more than anything.

Songwriters: Martin Nystrom

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