

March Readings and Reflections

Monday 1st March

John 6:41-51

Did you hear about the magic tractor? It went round a corner and turned into a field!

Did you “get” the joke?

This passage comes from a chapter where Jesus feeds as many as 15 000 people from a packed lunch “borrowed” from a child and ends, having walked on water, with Peter being the first to recognise who Jesus *really* was (V69). He “gets” it. The problem arises with those who don’t or more correctly, won’t!

The “churchgoers” in his hometown synagogue of Capernaum are outraged by him.

They know where bread comes from! It comes from God! The problem is that even when he gives them a sign (a clue), John records 7, they will not recognise God when he stands before them. To do that would be to accept that they were not special and their religion was worthless. Even today, good, decent, worthy people will not “get” it. *Wullie D*

Tuesday 2nd March

John 6:52-59

‘Give Blood’; it’s a long time since I was a blood donor and I must get round to doing so for the blood donated saves lives in routine surgery and in emergencies. Blood was sacred to the Jews who were forbidden to eat meat with blood in it. In the Passover the blood of the lamb placed on the door lintel saved the firstborn.

Jesus uses very strong language in our passage today so no wonder it stirred up a storm.

Jesus uses strong words because this is strong medicine indeed. Life saving medicine.

How much are you loved by God? The blood of the lamb says utterly and completely;

now love me and follow me.

David 07540 620632

Wednesday 3rd March

John 6:61-69

Many of us set our sights on numbers of people in our church. We get concerned when numbers drop. Jesus puts little emphasis on mere numbers. He looks for quality not quantity. Some take offence at His difficult truths, so they drop out of discipleship and church-going. Jesus asks His disciples here, ‘do you also want to leave’. Some will never leave God’s Church: they cannot quit. They have found too much, learned too much, been strengthened by Jesus, and know His presence. They can never give Him up: He has ‘the words of eternal life’.

Rev. Linda

Thursday 4th March

John 7:1-13

“You go on....My time has not yet come” (v8)

God’s agenda and timing is often very different from ours. Jesus own kin – his brothers (though in reality they were step brothers), provoke Him with unbelieving hearts to “show Yourself to the world”. Perhaps there was a bit of jealousy thrown into the mix here – maybe in their hearts, they thought: ‘who is this upstart? Who does He think He is?’.

Whatever their motivation, the brothers’ mindset was a worldly one, with a complete disregard for seeking the will of Father God. They appear to have been willing to push Jesus in at the deep end, with no real concern for the success of His ministry.

Jesus does end up launching into the deep, but only in God the Father’s timing, after God the Father sends Him with a message. May we follow His example: seek the will of God and wait on the Lord for His Word and perfect timing.

Jenni P

Friday 5th March

John 7:14-24

I believe God has often challenged me to do things even when I haven’t understood why.

Doing this on faith alone is hard (v17-18) even if we understand that it is His purposes we need to fulfil. To know His will may involve us doing things that are embarrassing, or outside our comfort zone and may entail a willingness to become ‘clowns for God’, (as one

previous pastor once explained it to me) is off-putting. Trusting that doing so will achieve His purpose, even if it doesn't appear to and doesn't advance our own reputation is very challenging indeed.

But then whose reputation are we to build up?

Dilys

Saturday 6th March

John 7 25-36

Jesus told the Jews that they couldn't go where He was going. But to the needy, helpless, sick, confused (in other words, us)... He promised not only to go and prepare a place for us to be with Him, but also to return to 'abide' in us. So we can have His presence with us throughout our life on earth – truly a 'vale of tears' for many of us – and also look forward to eternity spent with Him. It's a great prospect on a grey day during lockdown! *Peter S*

Sunday 7th March

Psalms 19:7-end

In today's reading we hear of the perfect, precious word of God; it gives us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Whilst it does not give us all knowledge, the knowledge it gives us is true and perfect. David insisted that the value of God's word was more valuable than gold. Despite his own great riches, he wanted no amount of money or wealth to command his attention and affection more than the word of God. *How do we value the word of God?* Is it more precious than money, or sweeter than honey for us? *Peter M*

Monday 8th March

John 7:37-44

There is a lot that could be said about today's reading. It may only be a few verses but these few verses have in them the core of the entire gospel message – an invitation to come to Christ. What really draws me as I prepare this reflection though, is this "If *any* man thirst, let him come to me and drink." **Any** man. Not just the rich or the poor, or the educated or the unlearned, or the young or the old. **Any**. We are all welcome. And I wonder, who should we be welcoming that we currently aren't? *Frankie*

Tuesday 9th March

Psalms 9:1-11

'God's Power and Justice'

The psalmist declares his intentions, out loud and proud. I will, I will, I will, I will ... But it comes not from confidence in himself, but confidence in his God, as a righteous judge whose effective rule is not remote. Our Emmanuel dwells with us, dwells with you! He is your stronghold in times of trouble. It is good to remember, you are never alone. So let us join with the psalmist and whole-heartedly praise God for all His wonderful deeds, the one who blots out our enemies, oh give thanks to Him who sits enthroned forever! *Viv*

Wednesday 10th March

John 8:12-20

We as Christians are called to echo Christ's light in the world and give testimony for the kingdom of God. We are held not by human standard which can change and be corrupted, but the standards and values of God, so a question for you; how have you today given your testimony? How have you acted as a light in the world on behalf of Christ? *Danny*

Thursday 11th March

John 8:31-47

In John 8:31-47 Jesus addresses conflicts which occur when people mistakenly follow rigorous precedents and practices without fully considering the implications of old teaching. He revealed to us the God of love; the God of second chances and reconciliation for those who had sinned and failed in other aspects of their life. He pointed to a better way and he healed those who were damaged. He gave us the means of turning our lives around so that we can grow in trust and be in relationship with God, His Father, who created us - the God who is revealed as He is in Jesus. *Barry Stewart 07789004175*

Friday 12th March

John 8:48-59

Here is the claim that Jesus is timeless. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is the Lord of the past; because of the cross your sins, past present and future are forgiven. He is Lord of the present; He sees your struggles, knows your heart, he cares about you. He is the Lord of the future; by His death and resurrection you have the promise of eternal life. Put your trust in the Lord, He is with you now and always.

Liz Allen

Saturday 13th March

John 9:1-17

The gospels are full of people, who believe that they know what God wants, telling Jesus he's wrong. Sadly, we can fall into the same trap ourselves. We try to apply our beliefs, traditions and rules to God. He is beyond understanding, so it shouldn't surprise us that he surprises us. When Jesus healed on the Sabbath, the people were more annoyed by the day, than pleased by the healing. Throughout the gospels, Jesus is quicker to heal, love and forgive than 'religious' people. "God doesn't love that person" or "God wouldn't heal that person" they say. But he does. His offer of forgiveness is for all who will accept it – even us! Let's thank God that he's loved, forgiven and healed even us. *John Brierley*

Sunday 14th March

Psalms 107:1-9

The God of the old testament is often portrayed as a god of anger, or revenge, of war and violence. And here, God of the old testament shows his incredible compassion. He calls his people to him, guides them from the desert wastes, and leads them to a new city for a new life.

How much does this mirror our experience with Jesus? Our old lives are left behind in the desert wastes, and we are led gently by a compassionate leader, to a new city in our hearts, where Jesus **satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things**. Not the physical satisfaction of food, but the eternal satisfaction of renewal in his sacrifice.

Aidan Brierley

Monday 15th March

John 4:43-end

"Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe." v48.

Each day we wake, we wonder what will we do or see? what will the weather be like? Who will we talk too or meet? We ponder many things before we've even risen out of bed. We are shaped by pinning our hopes on the outcomes of the day, seeking reassurance in signs or words.

Having faith in God and stepping out with him is that reassurance and guidance. The signs are all around us constantly. Cherish every moment and the wonders will be bestowed upon us.

God's gift it's not conditional, don't question it, just accept it!

Susan R

Tuesday 16th March

John:10 1-10

We look at sheep and the general assumption is that they can be a bit stupid in their everyday behaviour.

What if it's the complete opposite. Perhaps they are wandering into areas that might be tricky or dangerous but What if it's the case that they go to these places with the confidence in knowing their shepherd will look for them and find them. We need that faith and confidence when we go into unknown situations. We know He is always with us and will seek us out especially in the dark places of our lives where we can confidently be safe in His arms.

Joyce D

Wednesday 17th March

John 10:11-21

What does this mean to us today.

In verse 7, Jesus says, 'I am the door of the sheep, all who ever came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them'.

We must ensure that we listen to what our Lord says and follow the true meaning and do not deviate from the truth. The laying down and taking up the life of a good shepherd expresses our undying love towards our Lord.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that Jesus is the good Shepherd and that he knows us all who laid down his life so we can live our lives to his praise and glory. Amen. *Heather J*

Thursday 18th March

John 10: 22-30

In this passage, as in many other examples, Jesus uses the picture of a shepherd and his sheep to help explain what he is saying. His sheep listen to him and know his voice; those who don't believe in him are not his sheep (v 26). He is our shepherd who will care for us, guide us and comfort us through difficult times; no-one can snatch us from his hand (v 28). No matter what is happening we are safe and protected. How can we help others to see and believe?
Marion M

Friday 19th March

Matthew 2:13-18

When I was young I couldn't understand how terrible events made it into the Bible. How could Herod order the slaughter of those babies? As I write China is in the news accused of mass genocide against a Muslim minority with vast numbers in terrible detention centres.

The extraordinary miracle of the Incarnation (Jesus becoming man) that Jesus was prepared to face the very worst situations imaginable. In this situation He was saved due to Joseph's obedience to the dream but we know how it ended. Bonhoeffer wrote from a concentration camp in WW2 '**only the suffering God can help**'.

David 07540 620 632

Saturday 20th March

Psalms 32

What's the worst thing you've ever done? No don't tell me! Here's mine; when I was thirteen I went golfing and a girlfriend came with me on a nice summer's day. Anyway I badly mishit a ball and it broke her nose! She and her family were very understanding and that made it worse. Sometimes sorry doesn't seem enough.

Like me the psalmist is in agony v 3 '**bones wasting away through groaning**'. The Good News is that God has it covered v1-2. Repentance literally turning away from our sins and bringing whatever it is to God. **The cross of Christ is sufficient – v 11 'Be glad in the Lord and rejoice'**.

David 07540 620632

Sunday 21st March

Psalms 51:1-13

Have you ever felt really guilty when you did something bad, big or small? I have. I would venture to say it wasn't adultery followed by murder like David in today's reading.

No matter what we have done, we can be like David, ask for mercy (v1), cleansing (v's 2 & 7), a clean heart (v10), restored joy (v12) and then help others (v13).

Take God at his word, receive his forgiveness and restoration to be his disciple in a needy world. He did it for me and still does. He is faithful to forgive and restore you.

John Buxton

Monday 22nd March**Psalm 73:1-13, 28**

Does life sometimes feel unfair? Asaph had doubts about following God's way rather than human ways. As he struggled through this dilemma he questioned his beliefs about having a pure heart - did this make for a better life than those who think God but act human? Then he thought about the strength, courage and hope he received in his relationship with God. Asaph concluded he would rather be with God and have nothing than have everything and no God. This is truly a psalm of the heart, take comfort from it. *Lorraine A*

Tuesday 23rd March**Psalm 61**

Introduction: Psalm 61 was written by King David when he was hiding from his son who wanted to kill him. This is a prayer for help.

God never changes and, whatever we are going through, we can cry out to Him to protect us and keep us safe and know that He will be there for us. He has promised that he will never leave us or forsake us. At this time, when everything around us seems uncertain and insecure, let us remember: 'Living under the shadow of His wing, we find security; Bowed in adoration at His feet, we dwell in harmony'. God is our rock, salvation and fortress. David made a vow to praise God everyday, in every circumstance. Can our lives become a sacrifice of praise, especially when our daily walk is tough and uncertain?

Grace Hutchins

Wednesday 24th March**Psalm 85**

Written when the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon, with better days ahead of them, this Psalm can be a source of help and support for all who have suffered during the last year. The "Lockdowns" of Covid mean that many folk are in the captivity and distress of the Pandemic. Something Matthew Henry says about this Psalm: "the sense of the present afflictions should not drown the remembrance of former mercies"

We can remember and then also look forward as the Psalm asks God to revive his people and to intervene and bring them back to spiritual life. God can revive nations, church families and individuals.

Let us respond and ask God for a fresh touch of his love. Re-read the first part of verse 8. The Psalm also points to Jesus in Matthew 6 v25-34

Jac

Thursday 25th March**Psalm 40:5-11**

Speaking words of wisdom.

Do you know someone whose faith just seems to flow out of them naturally?

Here David lends the full weight of his poetry to his understanding of God's promises.

V5 - Never enough words to tell of God's plans for us. V7 - His instructions written for us to follow.

V9 - David never stops talking about the good news. V10 - God's faithfulness and salvation, His loyalty and constant love, which David knows will keep him safe.

Allow your faith to flow more freely today as you are assured of God's constant love.

Ruth Brierley

Friday 26th March**Psalm 22**

This psalm so fits our current situation. Today we are pushed by society towards a 'toxic positivity' that brave and positive façade. In God we need have no pretence. Here is a guide 'My God, My God why have you forsaken me.. My God I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest'. It is a powerful thing to question. Here the writer feels encircled by the enemy, as we are by a hidden enemy. However, in this, by feeling able to speak his fears and anguish in prayer, and publicly, slowly comes around to the truth we all know. 'But you O LORD, do not be far from Me; O My strength, hasten to help me'

Tom Walsh

Saturday 27th March**Psalm 20**

Panic was my first reaction seeing my name on a list to do something new, but I read Psalm 20 v1 reassured me a bit! Here's what I made of it:

If you give God praise and trust in him, you will find happiness and joy. He will answer you when you feel troubled. Don't put your trust in material things, like new cars (the psalmist says chariots and horses!), but trust in the power of the Lord and you will win.

Even at times of global trouble and threats to humanity, he will be there for you. So, when you feel troubled or anxious, pick up your Bible, look in Psalms, keep calm and trust God.

Tish (737691)

Sunday 28th March Palm Sunday**Mark 11:1-11**

How fickle can we humans be? Jesus was hailed as a king as he entered Jerusalem on what we call Palm Sunday. The crowds were ecstatic in praise of him (v 9), and were celebrating the coming of the Kingdom.

Fast-forward five days, and the crowd had a very different tone – “Crucify him” (Mark 15 v13).

It's easy to be swept along by the masses, but it's so important to hang on to what you believe, and what Jesus tells us – It's important to be true to yourself, and true to God, in every situation, and not to bend to public opinion. Let's be consistent as well as constant in the service of the King.

Mike (737691)

Monday 29th March**John 12:1-11**

It was a sign of hospitality for the host to wash the guests' feet but the fact that Mary then anointed Jesus' feet with an extremely expensive oil showed her intense love and deep respect for Him.

Jesus rebukes Judas Iscariot's fake concern for the poor and shows appreciation at Mary's kind gesture. When Jesus spoke, it was always with intent and purpose but people, including His own 12 apostles, did not understand its meaning.

The leading priests attended Lazarus' house and threatened to kill him because the people had turned against them and were following Jesus. Was this the start of people truly believing in the Son of God just before his dreadful death??

Lorraine de Simone

Tuesday 30th March**John 12:20-36**

When God sends us out upon a road, He does not send us out without directions and without guidance. When God gives us a task, He does not leave us to do it in the lonely weakness of our own strength. God is not a silent God. When the strain of life is too much for us, when the effort of God's way is beyond our human resources, if we listen we will hear Him speak, and we will go on with His voice ringing in our ears and His strength surging through us.

Our trouble is, not that God does not speak, but that we do not listen enough.

Grace and Frank Hutchins 01912852171

Wednesday 31st March**John:13 21-32**

Jesus is troubled, he knows what is going to happen to him and who is going to betray him. He tells his disciples that it will be one of them, one of the twelve, (before this he had only said it would be someone close to him). In the same passage from Mark (14:19) they all say “*Surely you don't mean me*”. Jesus knew who it was; He knew his disciples better than they knew themselves. In the same way, he knows us better than we know ourselves.

Marion M