



Over Lent we want to cultivate a real understanding of what it means to follow Jesus in today's world. We move from the place of preparation in February's theme **Prayers for Living**, and now as this new season begins we are out on a journey like Jesus's first followers! But it's not the same road, we cannot travel with the disciples the way they did, for their story has been and we have the perspective of the Third Day of Jesus's resurrection to draw from.

This year we travel in parallel with the disciples, not so much going into their world as we are weaving them into ours! How can we move through Lent mindful that Jesus wants us to invite him into the here and now rather than escape into his past? What happens when we look through our lives with resurrection eyes, as we let the events of Jesus's first followers unfold in our own world. As well as the Gospels we will have a particular focus on Psalms, poetry, and our relationship with God.

Each week we begin with a psalm as the Psalms help us to engage with all the passion of life from the depths of despair to the heights of joy. You could say that the eternal hope of The Third Day is almost written into them, the light of God that meets us in the midst of our complex lives. The resonance of the Third Day of resurrection and reconciliation is woven into human experience and is richly expressed through this ancient poetry.

Join us over Lent as we take time to reflect on place, passion, poetry, praise, paths, poverty, providence, pasture, patience, pardon, pain and presence! The journey to the resurrection is not one back in time, for the resurrection comes to find us wherever and whenever we are...

Sanctuary First would like to thank Jock Stein who helped us in developing the framework for the weekly sub-themes focused around a different psalm each week and for all the words beginning with P!

SETTING THE SCENE: A visual motif for each week. An optional additional focus point for preparing worship services or multimedia inspired by the material.

SEEDS TO SOW: Open-ended prompts to inspire creative responses to the themes. Perhaps a song, some drawing, or creative writing! They are short and sweet, simply a starting off place for you and your imagination, be encouraged to tailor and develop as suits you. Often they take the form of a question, to encourage reflection.

Each week of the six week theme runs Sunday-Saturday and has its own subtheme, which contains daily Bible readings and prompts for thought.

God's Place, Our Passion (26 February)

Each week we will focus on two words beginning with P (this week *Place* and *Passion*). Firstly in the light of the psalms and finally in the light of the resurrection. In between we will contemplate how the Trinity and ourselves, as the wider community of God, relate to these themes. We seek not so much to bring ourselves back in time to where Jesus was, but to discover where Jesus is now, alongside us, working with us toward our flourishing. The timeless Lenten story weaves into our day-to-day lives as we live each day in the context of the universe resounding Third Day.

SETTING THE SCENE: **ANGELS IN THE WILDERNESS**

SEEDS TO SOW: **WHAT ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT?**

1. Psalm 84

2. Matthew 23:
37-39

3. Matthew 3:16 -
4:11

4. Luke 4: 14-30

5. Psalm 32

6. Hosea 11: 1-4

7. John 4: 19-26

1. **God's Place, Our Passion... in the light of the Psalms.** This Psalm is about going to the temple to worship, but in the light of the resurrection we are the temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells, so therefore we ourselves are the lovely dwelling place. God finds a place in us. God finds a place in our passion.
2. **Our place.** Jesus, with touching imagery of a mother hen, says our place is under his wings, but he laments that we can't see it, we cannot see God come among us. We see here an echo of John 1: 9-10.
3. **Jesus's place.** A place of surrender to God, crucially in the context of knowing that he is beloved of God. Rooted in this love he is able to resist temptation. Divine eternal love is stronger than temporal temptations. Jesus was first and foremost *in* God's love and only secondly in the wilderness. And then there's those angels that show up in the wilderness in verse 11, what's that all about?
4. **The Holy Spirit's passion.** We see the Spirit's passion in Jesus's ministry, a manifesto of justice, healing, restoration and transformation; and this passion is also now the church's manifesto as we are Christ in the world today.
5. **My place.** "*You are a hiding-place for me*". (Linking back to hiding under Jesus's wings on Day 2.) With God we can find a place to hide, but not to hibernate or to hide completely away. Knowing that there is a place for us, sheltered in God's love, empowers us to be *in* the world living out the life of Christ.
6. **God's passion.** Such tender words, we are God's passion! In 1 John we are told that God is love, and God cannot help but love. We are the embodiment of Christ (link back to Matthew 3: 17 above). We are beloved parts of the Body of Christ, tucked under wings, the apple of God's eye (see Psalm 17: 8).
7. **God's Place, Our Passion... in the light of the resurrection.** "*But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.*" A salutary reminder to us that it is the father's will that the church should be united. How can we work towards unity in the light of the Third Day?

God's Poetry, Our Praise (5 March)

Each week we will focus on two words beginning with P (this week *Poetry* and *Praise*). Firstly in the light of the psalms and finally in the light of the resurrection. In between we will contemplate how the Trinity and ourselves, as the wider community of God, relate to these themes. We seek not so much to bring ourselves back in time to where Jesus was, but to discover where Jesus is now, alongside us, working with us toward our flourishing. The timeless Lenten story weaves into our day-to-day lives as we live each day in the context of the universe resounding Third Day.

SETTING THE SCENE: **A MAKAR AT WORK** (*makar* is a Scots word for poet)

SEEDS TO SOW: **IMAGINE YOURSELF AS A LIVING POEM, WRITTEN BY GOD**

1. Psalm 145
 2. Ephesians 2: 1-10
 3. John 1: 1-18
 4. 1 Corinthians 12-13:3
 5. 2 Corinthians 3: 1-3
 6. Matthew 17: 1-9
 7. John 3: 1-21
1. **God's Poetry, Our Praise... in the light of the Psalms.** Imagine the disciples sharing this psalm together *before* and then *after* the resurrection. Consider the praise offered then — and now — in response to the divine poetry of God's love.
 2. **Our poetry.** We are a collective craftsmanship of our Makar God wrought by divine grace (verses 4-7). *Makar* is a traditional Scots word for poet. A poet is at root a 'maker' someone who makes things by taking separate pieces and putting them together as a new whole. We have an opportunity to respond to God's gift with our own creativity, to be makars too. God has crafted us and crafted us to do good things, to create in turn.
 3. **Jesus's poetry.** Or, even, Jesus AS poetry. The poetry at the heart of the universe.
 4. **The Holy Spirit's poetry.** The gifts of the Spirit are poetry in motion. You could say there is a sense of harmony, balance, resonance, metre, rhythm, cadence, animated as they are by love, more than the sum of their individual parts.
 5. **My poetry.** Thinking of our lives as poems to God, we are letters of Christ written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God!
 6. **God's praise.** 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!'
 7. **God's Poetry, Our Praise... in the light of the resurrection.** Coming, in the night, like Nicodemus, to Jesus with our questions.

Gods' Paths, Our Poverty (12 March)

Each week we will focus on two words beginning with P (this week *Paths* and *Poverty*). Firstly in the light of the psalms and finally in the light of the resurrection. In between we will contemplate how the Trinity and ourselves, as the wider community of God, relate to these themes. We seek not so much to bring ourselves back in time to where Jesus was, but to discover where Jesus is now, alongside us, working with us toward our flourishing. The timeless Lenten story weaves into our day-to-day lives as we live each day in the context of the universe resounding Third Day.

SETTING THE SCENE: **STANDING AT A CROSSROADS**

SEEDS TO SOW: **ASKING FOR ANCIENT PATHS (See *Jeremiah 6: 16*)**

1. Psalm 40
 1. **Gods' Paths, Our Poverty... in the light of the Psalms.** Reading this Psalm in the light of the resurrection, a cry of deliverance that could be in the mouth of the risen Christ and becomes for the believer a song of deliverance from dead-ends to the paths of peace.
2. Jeremiah 6: 16-20
 2. **Our paths.** This passage invites us to reflect upon the ancient paths wherein the good way lies. To search out the well worn ways of peace as we follow rather than looking for shortcuts that often lead to injustice.
3. John 6: 38-40
 3. **Jesus's path.** Jesus didn't look for shortcuts, this was a long road. Instead he was willing to follow our Father's way from heaven to earth, to the cross, to the tomb, to the upper room. Christ's way brought him up against evil men for he challenged entrenched injustice. Because he refused the temptations of the wilderness it took him to the cross (linking back to our Matthew 3:16 - 4:1 reading in week 1).
4. John 16: 12-15
 4. **The Holy Spirit's path.** The Spirit's path is never to look to self, but is continually pointing out the road that Jesus took in obedience to the Father.
5. Romans 5: 1-5
 5. **My paths.** Our path is not just about the destination, but about how it shapes us as we walk it. The journey itself is part of the ongoing work of discipleship, through perseverance developing character.
6. Philippians 2: 1-11
 6. **God's poverty.** The path of humility.
7. Romans 12
 7. **Gods' Paths, Our Poverty... in the light of the resurrection.** In the light of the Cross, reconciling us to God, this then is how we should live, the path we should walk. In response to Christ's sacrificial death on the cross so we are living sacrifices living in service to others.

God's Providence, Our Pasture (19 March)

Each week we will focus on two words beginning with P (this week *Place* and *Passion*). Firstly in the light of the psalms and finally in the light of the resurrection. In between we will contemplate how the Trinity and we, as the wider community of God, relate to these themes as we invite the Lenten story into our day-to-day. We seek not so much to bring ourselves back in time to where Jesus was, but to rediscover where Jesus is now, alongside us, working with us for our flourishing. The timeless story weaves into our lives as we live each day in the context of the universe resounding Third Day.

SETTING THE SCENE: **SHEEP FANK (A SCOTS WORD FOR A SHEEP PEN)**

SEEDS TO SOW: **CONSIDER THE ROLE THE PSALMS HELD IN JESUS'S LIFE**

1. Psalm 23

(read the psalm as a whole)

2. Psalm 23: 2-3a

3. Psalm 23: 3b

(and whole psalm)

4. Psalm 23: 4-5

5. Psalm 23: 5

6. Psalm 23: 6

7. Ephesians 5: 1-2

1. **God's Providence, Our Pasture... in the light of the Psalms.** God's providence is such a reassuring phrase. It tells us that God cares for his creation, but more than that he cares about all aspects of our lives. When we are confused about which path to take in life guidance is always available. The whole of this psalm speaks to us of the goodness of God. Those who spend time in prayer become more aware of the Providence of God.
2. **Our pasture.** Sometimes providence takes over and interjects in our lives. We find ourselves flat on our backs. Verse 2 says 'He makes me lie down in green pastures'. Sometimes God has to intervene in our lives to save us from ourselves.
3. **Jesus's pasture.** This psalm follows on from Psalm 22, in which many see a prophecy of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Some have seen Psalm 23 as one of comfort following the psalm of dereliction. It has been suggested it could have been in the mouth of Jesus as he walked the pasture that would take him to the cross. The rod and staff of God, God his shield and protector.
4. **The Holy Spirit's pasture.** Here in this psalm the comforting presence of the Spirit is seen walking the path of the brokenhearted and betrayed. The table of sustenance in the midst of great trials. Anointing the head of the bruised, lonely and bereaved. (See Luke 4: 16-30.) The overflowing compassion of the Good Shepherd.
5. **My cup overflows.** The overflowing compassion of the Good Shepherd. Jesus told the story of the good shepherd who was willing to risk everything for the one sheep (see Matthew 18: 12-14). The overflowing generosity of God is a challenge to each of us. When we give of ourselves to others is it of the overflowing kind?
6. **God's providence.** Goodness and mercy are the eternal attributes of a providential God. This kind of belief and value give us a confidence that no matter what comes our way — God is working out plans for our good.
7. **God's Providence, Our Pasture... in the light of the resurrection.** Since Jesus has walked the shadow of death with us and for us, the eternal providence of God raised him to a new life. So we also are being raised to newness of life in anticipation of our death and resurrection.

God's Patience, Our Pardon (26 March)

Each week we will focus on two words beginning with P (this week *Place* and *Passion*). Firstly in the light of the psalms and finally in the light of the resurrection. In between we will contemplate how the Trinity and we, as the wider community of God, relate to these themes as we invite the Lenten story into our day-to-day. We seek not so much to bring ourselves back in time to where Jesus was, but to rediscover where Jesus is now, alongside us, working with us for our flourishing. The timeless story weaves into our lives as we live each day in the context of the universe resounding Third Day.

SETTING THE SCENE: **FEET SET UPON A ROCK**

SEEDS TO SOW: **WHAT WOULD A DAY SHAPED BY MATTHEW 6: 12 LOOK LIKE?**

1. Psalm 25

2. Matthew 6: 12

3. Isaiah 53

4. Isaiah 30: 19-21

5. Psalm 40

6. 1 John 1: 5-10

7. Romans 5: 6-8

1. **God's Patience, Our Pardon... in the light of the Psalms.** Once again the psalmist has a perspective on God as being compassionate and forgiving. Take time to explore the consequences of forgiveness in this psalm. This is the God and Father to whom Jesus taught us to pray. If we expect God to pardon us are we not duty bound to practice this in return? God's pardon is costly — there is never anything cheap about forgiveness. It's costly for God.
2. **Our pardon.** Have you ever thought that you have received forgiveness through the Lord's prayer. It not always the case that we have to forgive, too often we are the ones who need to receive forgiveness. Seeking out the gift of self-awareness and realising when we have hurt someone is a mark of Christian growth and of God's Spirit at work in our hearts and lives. When we understand costly forgiveness our pardon takes on a new significance
3. **Jesus's patience.** This is a passage of great depth. Jewish scholars relate this to Israel as a suffering people. But Christians see in this an amazing prophecy explaining the nature and purpose of the death of Jesus. The prophet relates in such detail the suffering servant's patience in the face of great humiliation. John in his gospel tells how Jesus's death fulfils all that Isaiah had said. More so, this passage of scripture speaks to each one of us. It pulls us into the journey of Christ's death and resurrection. It is because of us our sin that he was wounded. Not to appease an angry God but to fulfil love's demands. Compassion operates to fulfil justice and mercy. To love is to bear the cost of forgiveness.
4. **The Holy Spirit's patience.** This whole chapter is moving, highlighting the patience of God with his rebellious people. Even in our most defiant moments, God still can be heard in our ears saying, "This is the way walk in it."
5. **My patience.** The power we need to complete the tasks God calls us to do starts with our patience. We must learn to wait on God. God's timing, God's providence will always bring us to the right place. Our patience will reward us in the end with the capacity to move beyond our own potential.
6. **God's pardon.** How amazing once again to know the truth sets us free. The place of confession and self awareness is the start of the road to forgiveness and pardon.
7. **God's Patience, Our Pardon... in the light of the resurrection.** These verses seek to help us understand the depth of God's patience and love for us and the depth of his justice.

God's Presence, Our Pain (Holy Week, 2 April)

Each week we will focus on two words beginning with P (this week *Place* and *Passion*). Firstly in the light of the psalms and finally in the light of the resurrection. In between we will contemplate how the Trinity and we, as the wider community of God, relate to these themes as we invite the Lenten story into our day-to-day. We seek not so much to bring ourselves back in time to where Jesus was, but to rediscover where Jesus is now, alongside us, working with us for our flourishing. The timeless story weaves into our lives as we live each day in the context of the universe resounding Third Day.

SETTING THE SCENE: A BRAZIER BURNING IN A COURTYARD

SEEDS TO SOW: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LIVE IN THE LIGHT OF THE RESURRECTION?

1. Psalm 13

(Palm Sunday)

2. Isaiah 53: 3

3. Luke 22: 39-46

4. John 19: 30 & John 20: 19-23

5. Luke 22: 54-62

(Maundy Thursday)

6. Psalm 22

(Good Friday)

7. Isaiah 40: 27-31

(Holy Saturday)

1. **God's Presence, Our Pain.... in the light of the Psalms.** Faith is never straightforward. The psalms help us have an honest dialogue with God. We need to realise that our pain and disappointment throughout life is all part of the human condition. We need to focus on the unfailing love of God, rather than the inner fears that can torment our wellbeing. No doubt as Holy Week begins, the story of Palm Sunday for Jesus had a different perspective. King Jesus's throne would be a cross. In Luke 18: 31 Jesus predicts his death yet he goes resolutely to the cross because of the unfailing love of the Father.
2. **Our presence.** To gaze upon the the crucified Christ is not an easy thing to do. Here's a quote of Martin Luther's from The Heidelberg Disputation: "Now it is not sufficient for any, and it does them no good to recognise God in his glory and majesty, unless they recognise him in the humility and shame of the cross. Thus God destroys the wisdom of the wise." Luther invites us to recognise God in the midst of our suffering. Yet we by nature want to turn away and hide from the disgrace and pain of a crucified God.
3. **Jesus's presence.** Once again we see Jesus struggling with the thought of the cross. He is sustained by the presence of the angels. He is concerned that his disciples might face the trials of the cross themselves. At one time they had said they could drink from his cup. Now faced with the cup they are found sleeping. Lots to write about in this passage. Our presence wants us to hide away, fall asleep. Jesus faces the present and his presence is sustained by heaven.
4. **The Holy Spirit's presence.** These two passages symbolically connect breath with the Holy Spirit. The crucifixion of Jesus was a cosmic event reaching out down through time. The cry of the last breath, "It is finished" is picked up in the breath of the risen Christ to the disciples. His death and last breath was all about the forgiveness of sins.
5. **My presence.** We return to Peter by the fireside where we began Lent on Ash Wednesday. As we look over the ashes what has changed for us since then?
6. **Jesus's pain.** Let's return to the denial scene and the gaze of Jesus upon Peter and then to the cross and the gaze of Jesus from the cross upon the women. The pain of denial versus the pain of love. It is overwhelming.
7. **God's Presence, Our Pain... the light of the resurrection.** How does it feel to read these verses from Isaiah in the light of the resurrection? What difference does it make to these verses about soaring with God to know that Jesus has been with us to the very depths too?