

Under Our Feet

September 2021 (29 August - 2 October)



Memories, legacies, roots, rocks and riddles lie under our feet waiting to be discovered. Every step we take lands on history, presses into nature, and stirs up a story. This month we are going to be thinking about what lies below the surface as we explore archaeology and heritage, legend and legacy, ecology and geology, nourishment and sustenance.

As we follow the footprints we'll be asking where are the roots sustaining life and where have we become uprooted? What are the historical currents and tectonic plates that have shifted underneath us to bring us to now? What is the earth telling us? Are we listening?

We'll take a walk with God and ask where have you and your shoes been this year? What surfaces have you walked over? What communities have you walked through? Where have you stumbled and where have you leapt? What have you discovered, uncovered, or recovered?

We will walk, run, scramble, slide, jump and sometimes even tread lightly just in case we find, like Moses, we're suddenly on holy ground...

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

Under our toes (29 August)

We begin thinking about the tactile appeal of solid ground under our feet from soft grass under our toes, to coarse warm sand, or cool, smooth flagstones. We will remember the myriad who have tread, crawled, crept and burrowed before us in the very same space and reflect on the pull of land that can be multi-sensory, invigorating, rewarding and dangerous...

1. Song of Solomon 2: 8-13

2. Psalm 45: 6-9

3. Deuteronomy 4: 1-9

4. Psalm 15

5. James 1: 17-27

6. Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

7. Your choice...

1. **Life under our feet.** God's creation is crisscrossed by the paths of lovers and fighters, gazelles and doves; the ground we walk on is made of the footprints of all those journeys. Life is everywhere, irrepressible, always returning.
2. **Myrrh and aloes and cassia.** The heady aromas of life, products of the land, bursting compounds of gladness.
3. **Occupying land.** The notion of taking possession of land makes for uncomfortable reading. But when we come to this text we are encountering layers of history, of humanity learning what it means to succeed and fail and to live up to and fall far short of what God created us to be. The pull of land can have a dangerous appeal.
4. **Being paid to look the other way.** How often are we bribed to look the other way? To not take a look under our feet and see the damage our choices are making? To not see the cost of our convenience? We get paid alright but that leaves a bill to pay. The land pays and the poor people who live on it.
5. **Look down.** Close your mouth for a second and draw a circle around your feet and inspect that little plot of ground. How are you caring for it? How are you responsible for it? What are you weeding out? What are you helping to grow? And in what ways are you practicing the true religion of caring for the vulnerable and distressed who pass through it?
6. **Now wash your hands!** More than ever we know now the importance of washing our hands. This passage isn't hating on hygiene. We should clean our hands to keep us physically safe, and to be considerate to others... but we don't clean our hands as a divine insurance policy... Cleanliness is not next to godliness, it's good but it's not next to godliness. Toasters are great but they're not next to godliness. For a clue on godliness we can go back to James 1:27.
7. **Our Daily Worship writer is invited to choose a scripture reading that relates to land, nature or stewardship.** If you are using this material for personal reflection we invite you to likewise choose your own passage to conclude the week.

Under our soles (5 September)

Under our soles are the stories of the souls that have lived here before us. The past doesn't just live in books or museums, it is literally under our feet... We pray and invite God to travel with us as we consider our history and heritage — where we have come from and where we are going.

1. Proverbs

22:1-2, 8-9,
22-23

2. Psalm 125

3. Isaiah 35: 1-7

4. Psalm 146

5. James 2: 1-7

6. Mark 7: 24-30

7. Your choice...

1. **Hearing our heritage.** This week as we think about history, let's put our ears to the ground and listen to the things that are more precious than any inheritance of gold or silver that have been left behind by past generations. The legacies of generosity and justice.
2. **Being mountains.** Tectonic plates far below the surface shift and collide forming mountains. What are the deep fundamental tectonic shifts that create those who trust in the Lord and make them into mountains?
3. **Underground, waiting.** Reflecting on reserves of water — and of grace — lying below the surface, ready to bring transformation.
4. **Perished plans underfoot.** 'Princes' ultimately return to the earth and their plans perish alongside them. When we walk through the present, we are also walking over history. With humility we turn our eyes to God and think about the eternal things that outlast our princely plans.
5. **Gold rings and dirty clothes.** When we study history, or tell stories about it, we tend to focus on the rich and powerful — those with the gold rings — at the expense of those in dirty clothes. Often we do so because there's more written records available about them. But we miss so much human experience by neglecting to consider the lives of folk, the majority of us, who schlepped about in dirty clothes. Imagine a history book of the last 2,000 years written by Jesus.
6. **A lot of history...** Jesus's words here sound phenomenally harsh. One interpretation of this famously difficult passage is that in verse 27 Jesus is acting out the commonly held prejudices at the time and in so doing giving the Syro-Phoenician woman the feed-line to set her up to deliver the punchline which immediately subverts it. People in Jesus's world may have been more shocked that he overcame the historical baggage and included her than by his apparent dismissal of her.
7. **Our Daily Worship writer is invited to choose a scripture reading that relates to heritage, history or how we think about the past.** If you are using this material for personal reflection we invite you to likewise choose your own passage to conclude the week.

Under our shoes (12 September)

Where have you and your shoes been this year? What surfaces have you walked over? What communities have you walked through? Where have you stumbled, where have you leapt? Where are you heading? What are you leaving behind? What are you stepping into...?

1. Proverbs 1: 20-33

2. Psalm 19: 1-6

3. Isaiah 50: 4-9

4. Psalm 116: 1-9

5. James 3: 1-12

6. Mark 8: 34-38

7. Your choice...

1. **Watch how you tread.** How can we walk with the surefooted lightness of wisdom and not the heavy-footedness of complacency?
2. **A vivid celestial sprint.** The sun runs its course and we run ours over God's earth as it revolves through the universe.
3. **A face like flint.** With its sharp edges flint has been invaluable in the development of civilisation — used both as a tool itself and to make other tools, to start fires, and as component in ceramics and construction. Despite its history of usefulness describing someone as being 'flinty' tends to have negative connotations. But there are times when sharpness and sparks are perhaps what is needed.
4. **Walking before the Lord.** What ground have we covered as we have walked before the Lord trying not to stumble?
5. **A few degrees.** A small change in the angle of a rudder can make an enormous difference over time as a boat travels through water. Similarly a slight shift in compass coordinates can lead to us travelling way off course. In the same way sometimes the small miscalculations we make, the little things we say that that seem insignificant at the time, can take us far from where we set out to be.
6. **Take up your cross and follow me, a hard road.** Unpacking this haunting phrase. If picking up a cross seems an uncomfortable idea for us reading this now think how it must have felt for a people who lived in a community where crosses were an all too real threat of state sanctioned violence.
7. **Our Daily Worship writer is invited to choose a scripture reading that relates to walking, running, or going on a journey.** If you are using this material for personal reflection we invite you to likewise choose your own passage to conclude the week.

Under our heels (19 September)

The ground beneath our feet can shift, literally and metaphorically. It can throw us surprises, taking us off route, off map, off kilter, off into the unexpected.

1. Exodus 3: 1-6
1. **Surprised by holiness.** Moses's *shod curiosity* leads to *barefoot reverence*.
2. Psalm 98: 1-6
2. **In tune with the earth...** Our new songs join ancient melodies of praise as creation responds to the creator. As we sing there are bass notes far below us: the infrasonic sounds of the earth, of tectonic plates and lava chambers, that sing haunting hymns of deep time.
3. 1 Corinthians 1: 18-24
3. **Unsignposted.** What if the path you are meant to follow goes off the beaten track and doesn't have neat signposts? For the early followers of Jesus there were precious few signs pointing the way forward, they seemed to be going against the prevailing wisdom of the day, and yet they found a way, a way that has led to us here now...
4. Deuteronomy 32: 7-14
4. **Unexpected sweetness right under our nose.** Where are we finding honey in the rock?
5. John 13: 1-17
5. **Upending expectations.** Jesus pulls the rug out from under Peter's preconceptions... and ties it round his waist to prepare himself for a demonstration of practical care and love.
6. Genesis 32: 22-32
6. **Not on the itinerary.**
Get a gift for your brother from duty free ✓
Check in your bags ✓
Get all of your family to the departure lounge ✓
Wrestle with a mysterious stranger on the runway who then blesses you and gives you a new name ... ✓
7. Your choice...
7. **Our Daily Worship writer is invited to choose a scripture reading that relates to exploration, surprises, or the unexpected.** If you are using this material for personal reflection we invite you to likewise choose your own passage to conclude the week.

Under our feet (26 September)

Discovering, uncovering and recovering as we think about what it means to be rooted, nourished and sustained...

1. Psalm 1

1. **From roots come fruits.** Drawing on living water.

2. Psalm 54

2. **Uprooted.** Sometimes we are uprooted, on the run, desperate. But our roots are tenacious like that of a willow tree. A branch from a willow or even an entire tree can be swept downstream and manage to re-root in a new location!

3. James 3: 13-18

3. **Does it bear good fruit?** Seeking a peaceable wisdom.

4. Mark 9: 30-37

4. **Poor soil.** The disciples are on shaky ground trying to jostle for prestige and status. 'Greatness' in the forest of God's Kingdom is welcoming life and making room for new shoots in the canopy, not claiming privilege at the expense of others. Scientists are discovering that many species of tree can share information underground throughout a forest and even send resources to other trees in need.

5. John 15: 1-5

6. Proverbs 16: 24

5. **The Vine.** Remaining in Jesus and Jesus remaining in us.

7. Your choice...

6. **Spinning honey.** Honey is sustenance spun from flowers, pockets of beauty bursting into sweetness and nourishment. In our gracious words and actions we spin a honey that sustains one another.

7. **Our Daily Worship writer is invited to choose a scripture reading that relates to being rooted, nourishment, or sustenance.** If you are using this material for personal reflection we invite you to likewise choose your own passage to conclude the week.