

The God Who Sees Us

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
The desert shall rejoice and blossom;
Like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
And rejoice with joy and singing. (Isaiah 35:1-2)

We are all in different places right now, both physically and mentally. This time of isolation due to the coronavirus pandemic may feel like a lonely and frightening experience for you, or perhaps it feels like a welcome break from the craziness of life – you may feel positive one minute and negative the next!

In this session, we are going to discover or be reminded of ways God works with us, where we are right now. God sees us and knows us and loves us. God uses the desert, wilderness, mountain tops and forests we find ourselves in, to change us. In these wild places, God breaks up the fixed order of our lives and speaks a message to us which we could not hear elsewhere.

As soon as Jesus was baptised, he was driven into the wilderness by the Spirit. Before Jesus went into the desert, God said to him:

You are the beloved. You are my beloved. I love you, not for anything you have done, nor for anything you will do in the future, but simply because you are. (Mark 1:11)



These words are for you and me.

Jesus regularly went into the wilderness to find solitude, pray, grieve, rest, escape arrest and to teach. The spirit knows that before we act, we need time and space to listen. This is your time and space to listen to God.

The desert can be a place for clarity, goals, and vision. A place for being equipped for the task ahead. It can also be a place for temptation.

The desert is a place for solitude where God sets the agenda.

The desert can be a symbolic place: An inner landscape of bleakness, barrenness, and beauty. Somewhere where we are stripped of all the resources we normally rely on. An internal place of emotional emptiness and loneliness. Somewhere we feel dry and parched. It can be a place of mental anguish, helplessness, hopelessness, and terror. It is also a place of wonder, where we encounter God in the depths of our being. We receive fresh revelations which change the direction of our lives.

There are many examples of desert experiences in the Bible: Jesus, Mary, Abraham, Sarah, Elijah, Moses, and Miriam to name just a few. Maybe our stories do not seem like much compared to these, but it is important that we consider our own experiences and connect our stories with God's big story. This connection helps us to develop empathy, a sense of purpose and wellbeing, and may even change the direction of our lives. If God can make a way for Moses and the Hebrew slaves, he can make a way for those of us suffering with pain, addictions, bereavement, rejection, and disappointment.

In this session, we will spend some time praying with Scripture as we consider our own desert experiences in life.



Your own desert experiences

Have a think about some of the tests and trials you have been through in your life.

Reflect on them.

Talk to God about them.

Maybe write down answers to these questions:

- What did you learn through your experiences?
- How have they changed you?
- What can you be thankful for?
- How do you feel when you revisit the desert experience(s)?

Praying with the Scriptures

We are going to spend some time with God in the Scriptures.

Example passages could be: Psalm 16:5-11, 23, 63:1-8, 121, John 15:1-17, Romans 8:1-11.

Feel free to choose another psalm or piece of Scripture if you prefer.

Spend some time with the text and try Slow Reading, or Lectio Divina.

Slow Reading of Scripture or Lectio Divina [\(find the separate page\)](#)

Make sure you are comfortable and spend as long as you like with the Scripture; allowing God to speak to you, responding to God and resting in God's presence.

Draw or write your own psalm

As we meditate on God who sees us, our feelings may be expressed effectively through art or writing.

You might want to respond to God by drawing or writing your own psalm.

Do this with complete trust in God and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Be completely honest with God. Let your feelings and emotions be known in whatever way feels right for you.

Or you might want to drink in the truths in this prayer-poem:

My Lord, who are you? Can you help me?

Can I learn to trust you?

How can I know you; how do I recognise you?

Help me to know just who you are...

My love is for the small things:

For the helpless; the lonely and lost;

the rejected and the refugee;

the frustrated and inadequate.

My love sees and embraces them all.

It never rejects the worst, and always, always hopes for the best.

It is in the new day, and the despair of a lonely night.

My love is weak, broken and bruised.

It feels as you often feel.

For my love is nailed to a cross, pinned on a darkened skyline.

It is a shroud in a borrowed tomb and tears on a Friday night.

Hope beyond despair, reality from the impossible; it is life after death.

My child, my love is – because I am.

And you will know me – because my love is for you.

Here are some drawings in response to meditating on scripture:



Above: Drawing based on John 15:5: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."



You, God, are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you,
my whole being longs
for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is no
water...

Above: This woodpigeon bathing with such freedom and abandon struck me as a joyful response to Psalm 63:1.