

Walking with Jesus

on the road to the cross

Lent
2021

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Week 1

WELCOME

What a year it has been! And Covid 19 continues to rage across the world forcing us to stay at home which means that we will probably not be able to meet together to celebrate Lent or Easter. Which is why I am inviting you to join me on a journey that will take us from Shrove Tuesday through to Easter Sunday.

WHY LENT?

If you are new to Lent or if you just want to start reading Matthew's Gospel or if you want to draw closer to God, then maybe this Lenten journey will help towards that.

The purpose of Lent is to give us an opportunity to follow in our Lord's footsteps as we journey through Matthew's Gospel. We will increase our knowledge of who God is and hopefully understand more about what Christ has done for us in coming to earth and dying for our sins on that Roman cross. We will read through a passage,



look briefly at what it is all about and prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to help us to see what he is saying to us each day. I suggest that you keep a journal (or use your 2021 diary which will have lots of spaces in it!) so that you can record what God is saying to you.

Every journey begins with the first step. That has to be prayer. Ask God to open your mind to see his truths and your heart to receive and obey what he commands. You will need to set aside time each day.



celebration before the 40-day “fast” where Christians traditionally give up a favourite food (for me definitely chocolate) or habit.

But you don’t have to give up something unless you want to do so. Why not think of doing something in *addition* to what you would normally do?

This could be reading a Christian book, or a book of the Bible (We’re going to be reading through most of Matthew’s Gospel during Lent) or deciding to take on

We all love a party and usually we would be having a pancake supper this evening in our church halls. But, because we are not able to meet together we will have our own Shrove Tuesday pancake supper at home either on our own or with our family or maybe even on Zoom!

Pancake Day is always the day before Ash Wednesday which is the day when Lent starts. This is an opportunity for a bit of a

something that will help a friend or neighbour who may be struggling or housebound. Some people who are vulnerable will be self-isolating and will need help with meals, shopping and collecting and delivering things.

So what happens on Shrove Tuesday—apart from eating lots of yummy pancakes?

Here is a simple pancake recipe. You will need the following:

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SHROVE TUESDAY (contd)

Pancake Recipe

100g plain flour

2 large eggs

300ml milk

1 tbsp sunflower or vegetable oil, plus a little extra for frying

Lemon wedges to serve (optional)

Caster sugar to serve (optional—I prefer to butter and syrup!)

Method

STEP 1 Put 100g plain flour, 2 large eggs, 300ml milk, 1 tbsp sunflower or vegetable oil and a pinch of salt into a bowl or large jug, then whisk to a smooth batter.

STEP 2 Set aside for 30 mins to rest if you have time, or start cooking straight away.

STEP 3 Set a medium frying pan or crêpe pan over a medium heat and carefully wipe it with some oiled kitchen paper.

STEP 4 When hot, cook your pancakes for 1 min on each side until golden, keeping them warm in a low oven as you go.

STEP 5 Serve with lemon wedges and caster sugar, or your favourite filling. Once cold, you can layer the pancakes between baking parchment, then wrap in cling film and freeze for up to two months.

Preparation for Ash Wednesday

When you have eaten your pancakes, dig out your palm crosses from last year and burn them until they are ashes. Gather up the ashes in a small



container (a lid from a jam jar will do just fine). Store that in a safe place for tomorrow when you will celebrate Ash Wednesday.



*That we, worthily
lamenting our sins and
acknowledging our
wretchedness,
May receive from you,
the God of all mercy,
Perfect remission and
forgiveness;
Through Jesus Christ
your Son our Lord.
Amen.*

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent and is always 46 days before Easter Sunday.

This 40-day season (not including Sundays) is marked by repentance, fasting, reflection and ultimately celebration on Easter Sunday. Lent represents Christ's 40 days in the wilderness where he was tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1-11).

Readings

**Joel 2:12-18; Psalm 51:1-12;
Matthew 6:1-4,16-18**

Opening prayer (Collect)

*Almighty and everlasting God,
you hate nothing that you have
made*

*And forgive the sins of all those
who are penitent:*

*Create and make in us new and
contrite hearts*

The blessing and imposition of ashes

Dear friends in Christ, at the Christian Passover we celebrate year by year our redemption through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Since early days the Church has kept the season of Lent as a time of preparation for Easter. We begin Lent by remembering the need for repentance. So let us ask God our Father to bless these ashes to our use. They have been made from the palms with which we greeted Christ our King with joy last Palm Sunday. They are a sign that we mean to prepare ourselves with penitence for Easter.

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ASH WEDNESDAY (contd)

Ashes

Put some of the ash you have prepared from the palm crosses you burned last night, onto your index finger and then onto your forehead making the sign of the cross. As you do so pray the following prayers.

Turn away from sin and believe the good news. (Mark 1:15)

Return to the Lord with all your heart; leave the past in ashes and turn to God with tears and fasting, for he is slow to anger and ready to forgive.

(Joel 2:12-13)



Lord, bless these ashes to our use, and grant that they may remind us of our mortality and of our need of repentance so that we may keep Lent faithfully in preparation for the joy of Easter. We ask this in the name of Christ. Amen.

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. (Genesis 3:9)

This reminds us of both humility and exaltation, of death and new life. The ashes signify our inner fragility and poverty, and the cross our salvation through the mercy of God.

The ash is symbolic. If you don't have any ashes, simply pray the prayers from your heart.

Jesus spent a lot of time praying. His disciples noticed that and asked him to teach them how to pray.

Scripture

Read Matthew 6:5-15. How not to pray/how to pray

“When you pray” - Jesus assumes that they will give, fast and pray, but warns them how not to pray. He says:

- Don't show off and don't pray to be seen by others!
- Get away from everyone and pray in secret.
- Don't pray long prayers, God knows what is on your heart.

Then in vs 9 he tells them how to pray. We call it *The Lord's Prayer*. It's really the ABC of prayer. Notice how brief and simple this prayer that he taught them is.

1 Prayer is a conversation with someone: “Our Father in Heaven”. We are children of our Father. That is important to remember when we pray to God.

2 When we pray, we pray that his name will be honoured and that his kingdom will grow.

3 And we ask him to meet all our

needs; forgive our sins and keep us safe from all evil.

The early Christians in Acts 2:42 “continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread and ‘the prayers’.” These were the ‘set prayers’ or liturgical prayers. (There is a huge difference between saying them and fervently praying them.)

The Apostle Paul says this to Timothy: *“I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people - for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”* (1 Timothy 2:1-4.)

Prayer

Dear Lord. Help us to remember that you are our Heavenly Father and that we can talk to you anytime and anywhere. You know our innermost thoughts and we cannot hide anything from you. Help us to trust you with our lives, our daily needs and with the future.

Just imagine if we spent as much time praying as we spend worrying? Why is worrying so pointless? Is there a difference between 'concern' and 'worry'?

Scripture

Matthew 6:25-34. Worry, worry, worry!

Jesus' teaching on prayer leads on to his teaching about not laying up treasures on earth but, rather, laying up treasure in heaven – which leads on to not worrying.

- Worry won't change anything—it simply adds unnecessary stress to our day. Someone said worry is like a rocking chair, it keeps you busy but doesn't get you anywhere!
- We need to learn to live 'one day at a time'. This does not mean that we should not plan for tomorrow. Planning is important but worrying about tomorrow is a waste of time.

- We need to learn to trust our Heavenly Father to take care of us! Jesus says: "Your Heavenly Father knows what you need."
- Is there a cure? Yes, seek God first! Jesus says that we



are to be concerned about "his kingdom and his righteousness" and if we do that, he will take care of the rest.

Think about how you can focus on God's kingdom and doing his will today. Pray for guidance about how he wants you to seek his kingdom and his righteousness in your everyday life.

FRIDAY (contd)

God is building his kingdom and every day we are commanded to pray “your kingdom come” and become a part of his ongoing work in the world.

Prayer

Dear Lord. I am plagued with things that are going wrong. I'm worried about my family, my finances, my relationships and my job. Everything seems to be

crashing in around me at the same time and I am simply coming to you as I have nowhere else to turn. I know that you are the God of Peace and Love, and I come to you because fear of the future is causing me to worry and fear. I know that it is not your will for us to be distressed by worry and that you have told us not to be afraid but to trust you. Amen



*But seek first His kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Matthew 6:33

Jesus said that anyone who would be his disciple should first of all sit down and count the cost before deciding to follow him.

Scripture

Matthew 8:18-22

What's it going to cost me?

In this account we have two would-be followers of Jesus whom he actually puts off by telling them to think about the cost. Let's have a look at what he says:

1 The teacher of the law comes up as Jesus and his disciples are about to leave and says, "I will follow you wherever you go" but Jesus points out the cost of commitment.

First, he says that to follow him will sometimes involve hardship, insecurity, and homelessness. That was his lot and it would be theirs too. It is marvellous that a scribe should honour Jesus that highly, for Jesus had not been educated at the scribal schools. But admiration is not enough. Discipleship demands sterner stuff: blood, tears, toil, and sweat.



Is he prepared for the cost?

2 Another would-be disciple wants to follow Jesus but hopes to put it off. To "bury my father" meant to wait until his father is dead and buried. He is presented with the urgency of decision. He who loves parent or child more than Jesus is not worthy of him. The challenge to follow needs to be addressed here and now. It is a warning against missing the boat, and a challenge to respond and begin discipleship while opportunity knocks.

If you or I were invited to follow someone we would probably ask, 'Where are you going?' It is interesting that the real disciples did not ask that question.

The issue in discipleship is never where we are going, it is who we are going with.

Prayer

Lord, you call us to follow you. Lead us and guide us every day and give us the courage and the faith to follow you even when we don't understand where you are leading us or why.

