

# NEW BEGINNINGS - A JOURNEY FROM LENT TO EASTER

For the past few years I've produced a Lent reflection leaflet continuing a format started by Bryan Halson during our time together on the former Shrewsbury Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission. This year Lent takes on a new meaning for me following the death from natural causes of my beloved elder daughter Annie in June 2020. For Advent 2020 I put together a series of weekly reflections based on her writings as a scripture scholar, teacher and evangelist. For Lent this year I am sharing some more of her material as we journey through Lent towards Easter.

I've been looking at C S Lewis' classic *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* whilst helping home-school our 9 year-old granddaughter during the latest lockdown. It seems apposite in the current situation to identify with a bleak land where it is 'always winter but never Christmas.' At present it feels as though we are existing in a continual season of Lent, an enforced time of fasting and abstinence from so many of the ordinary pleasures we take for granted: visiting family and friends or new places, going to a film or out for a meal, enjoying a day out to the coast or the countryside. We wait, sometimes with impatience, for the time to move forward to Easter and the joy of the Resurrection. We are locked in a period of stasis, of stagnation. There is frustration and fear. Will our lives ever be the same again? But we can choose to embrace this enforced isolation as an opportunity to quieten ourselves, to truly listen to God and discern a new way forward. We can use this time wisely to consider changes to our lifestyle that will help conserve the fast-diminishing natural resources of our planet, to live more simply and to work for the good of all. This is an opportunity to focus on what really matters and to journey in faith and hope.

NOTE: The scripture verses used are selected from each day's readings, the reflections are taken from Annie's writings.

## Ash Wednesday, February 17

*Be reconciled to God ... now is the favourable time.*

2 Cor 5:20 – 6:2

'The journey with the Lord is a journey into love.'

## Thursday, February 18

*Anyone who loses his life for my sake will save it.* Lk 9:22-25

'You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you.'

## Friday, February 19

*Is not this the sort of fast that pleases me: to break unjust fetters ... to let the oppressed go free.* Is 58: 1-9

'We can bring release to captives by offering a place of welcome to the lonely and the marginalised.'

## Saturday, February 20

*Show me, Lord, your way so that I may walk in your truth.*

Ps 85: 1-6

'Lord, may your spirit reveal to me the right path and give me the strength, consolation and determination to walk it.'

## Sunday, February 21 Lent 1

*Your ways, Lord, are faithfulness and love for those who keep your covenant.* Ps 24:4-9

'Kindness is a choice. It is something we can choose to put on every day. Kindness is love in action – a practical expression of love. It is visible and active.'

## Monday, February 22

*The Lord is my shepherd: there is nothing I shall want.* Ps 23

'Before entering a place of prayer, a room or before beginning the day pause at the threshold for the length of an 'Our Father' and become aware of God gazing on you in love.'

## Tuesday, February 23

*The Lord rescues the just in all their distress.* Ps 33: 4-7, 16-19

'Kindness always starts with noticing the needs of others. Everyone needs kindness – everyone is hurting somewhere.'

## Wednesday, February 24

*A humbled, contrite heart, O God, you will not spurn.*

Ps 50: 3-4, 12-13, 18-19

'Don't wait to show a kindness. Do it while you have the opportunity. Do it now.'

## Thursday, February 25

*On the day I called, you answered me, O Lord.* Ps 137: 1-3, 7-8

'God speaks in all sorts of ways – through scripture, through nature, through other people. However, unless we slow down and listen, we miss his promptings and his voice.'

## Friday, February 26

*If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt, who would survive?*

Ps 129: 11-8

'I thought about the things in my backpack that I didn't really need for the journey that were weighing me down and restricting my movement. I thought about things in my life that need to move. I thought about things in my heart that need to move.'

## Saturday, February 27

*They are happy who follow God's law!* Ps 118: 11-2, 44-5, 7-8

'We are called as the people of God to serve the communities in whose lives we share and to be people of vision.'

## Sunday, February 28 Lent 2

*If God is with us, who can be against us?* Rom 8: 31-34

'God is not 'out there' to be sought, but already 'in here' to be found.'

## Monday, March 1

*Your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven.* Mt 5: 13-16

'As Psalm 67:1 tells us, to experience God's presence is to experience the light in God's shining face.'

## Tuesday, March 2

*Learn to do good, search for justice.* Isaiah 1:10, 16-20

'The letter of St. James teaches that genuine faith must be expressed in action. We must use our riches to serve others.'

## Wednesday, March 3

*They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified; and on the third day he will be raised up again.* Mt 20: 17-28

'Some losses are inevitable but they can lead to opportunity – sometimes we have to lose things and suffer pain and bereavement.'

## Thursday, March 4

*Happy the man who has placed his trust in the Lord.*

'Sometimes the days are all uphill - sometimes I can't see round the next corner, but I have to trust that the path is still there.'

## Friday, March 5

*Remember the wonders the Lord has done.* Ps 104:16-21

'When the going is heavy and all uphill, God sends me his breeze; when the going is easy, he warms me with his sun.'

## Saturday, March 6

*The Lord is compassion and love.* Ps 102: 1-4, 9-12

'When someone is grieving, just being there is an expression of kindness – we don't need to know what to say.'

### Sunday, March 7 Lent 3

*You, Lord, have the message of eternal life.* Ps 18: 8-11  
'God watches over me every day.'

### Monday, March 8

*My soul is thirsting for God, the God of my life. When can I enter and see the face of God?* Ps 41: 2-3, 42: 3-4  
'As we sought the face of the Lord we were filled with light, joy, peace and love.'

### Tuesday, March 9

*Your Father will not forgive you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.* Mt 18: 21-35  
'In prayer we contemplated God's unconditional love for us and his willingness to reform us when we fail.'

### Wednesday, March 10

*O praise the Lord, Jerusalem!* Ps 147: 12-13, 15-16  
'In telling our own stories we were able to invite God into our lives anew and to recognise his powerful presence among us.'

### Thursday, March 11

*O that today you would listen to his voice! Harden not your hearts.* Ps 92: 1-2, 6-9  
'So often we hurry through life, rushing from one task to the next, barely pausing to reflect or listen to the voice of the Lord.'

### Friday, March 12

*Repent, says the Lord, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.* Mk 12:28-34  
'Sometimes my path is blocked and I cannot go the way I would choose.'

### Saturday, March 13

*What I want is love, not sacrifice.* Hos 5:15 - 6:6  
'I believe that true evangelisation is born of love and desire: a love for all people and a desire that they come to know the love of Christ and the blessings of living in his kingdom.'

### Sunday, March 14 Lent 4

*O Let my tongue cleave to my mouth if I remember you not!* Ps 136: 1-6  
'In this time of prayer, as we searched in the silence, we put aside all distractions to seek God's face.'

### Monday, March 15

*No more will the sound of weeping or the sound of cries be heard.* Is 65:17-21  
'What is the message of the good tidings? Nothing less than the infinite God of love come down, God-with-us, peace on earth, joy to all, reconciliation, new life.'

### Tuesday, March 16

*The man was cured at once.* John 5:1-3, 5-16  
'Without God, there is no life, no movement, no change.'

### Wednesday, March 17

*Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News.* Mk 16: 15-20  
'The Church desperately needs effective evangelists. We need to understand our own teachings more clearly and then we need to get the message out to our cities, our country and our world.'

### Thursday, March 18

*O Lord, remember me out of the love you have for your people.* Ps 105: 19-23  
'The best use of life is love; the best expression of love is time; the best time to love is now.'

### Saturday, March 20

*Like a trustful lamb being led to the slaughter.* Jer 11:18-20  
'We need to build people up rather than tear them down.'

### Sunday, March 21 Lent 5

*A pure heart create for me, O God.* Ps 50: 33-4, 12-15  
'Sometimes I waste time and energy trying hard not to fall, when it would be easier to just let go and fall.'

### Monday, March 22

*If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.* Jn 8:1-11  
'It is impossible to love anyone fully and at the same time to resent someone else. You cannot give total love when your heart is divided – and a bitter heart is a divided heart.'

### Tuesday, March 23

*O Lord, listen to my prayer and let my cry for help reach you.* Ps 101:2-3, 16-21  
'The sharp points on my journey are the growth points'

### Wednesday, March 24

*He has sent his angel to rescue his servants.* Dan 3:14-20, 24-25, 28  
'The message of the angels is nothing less than the infinite God of love come down, God-with-us, peace on earth, joy to all, reconciliation, new life.'

### Thursday, March 25

*Here I am, Lord! I come to do your will.* Ps 39:7-11  
'It's easy to love people who are kind and lovely, but if God is going to teach us to love, he will bring some hard-to-love people into our lives.'

### Friday, March 26

*In my anguish I called to the Lord and he heard my voice.* Jer 20:10-13  
'Instead of rehearsing hurts over and over, release them.'

### Saturday, March 27

*I will make them into one nation.* Ezek 37:21-28  
'Our mission to serve cannot be restricted in terms of nationality, social group or religious affiliation.'

### March 28, Palm Sunday, Holy Week

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* Ps 21: 8-9,17-20,23-24  
'Sudden loss is harder to come to terms with.'

### Monday, March 29

*He does not cry or shout aloud.* Isaiah 42:1-7  
'In our busy, stressful world, we have to seek out silence and stillness consciously.'

### Tuesday, March 30

*My lips will tell of your help.* Ps 70: 1-6, 15, 17  
'We sat by the fire and shared laughter and companionship.'

### Wednesday, March 31

*I did not cover my face against insult and spittle.* Is 50:4-9  
'Instead of rehearsing hurts over and over, release them.'

### Holy Thursday, April 1

*If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet.* Jn 13: 1-15  
'Before we can love others, we must feel and understand how deeply God loves us.'

### Good Friday, April 2

*After Jesus had taken the vinegar he said, "It is accomplished," and bowing his head he gave up his spirit.* Jn 18: 1 -19.42  
'Giving ourselves to others in love takes courage. We can only do this knowing that we possess God's indestructible love.'

### Holy Saturday, April 3

*You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he has risen, he is not here.* Mk 16: 1-7  
'God's love for us and the kind of love we are to have for him and for others is *agape* – unconditional, giving, sacrificial love – signifying a commitment to act.'

### Easter Sunday, April 4

*We are witness.* Acts 10: 34, 37-43  
'We are called to live out our baptismal anointing: to be a light in the world, to bring joy to others' lives and to enrich them through the message we proclaim.'