

January 2021 Newsletter, Holburn West Church

The Wilderness is about more than not having food.

The theme of the “wilderness” has been recurrent while living in the midst of a pandemic and the accompanying restrictions in order to contain it. The past year has been a journey of stops and starts, with possibly more yet to come. If you pardon the pun, there is a feast of spiritual nourishment for us when we reflect on the Biblical passages which refer to “wilderness”.

As we approach the season of Lent, I would invite you to join with us live in our evening worship “Jubilee for All” (Details on the Holburn West Church website) or catch up with the recording of the service. We are building our worship from chapter headings in an inspiring book “The Grace-filled Wilderness” (A Journey Through Lent) by Magdalen Smith. Lent is traditionally observed by considering Jesus’ period in the wilderness where he is tempted by the Devil. Focussing on these, leads us to consider poignant themes such as appetite, identity, vocation, pain, vision etc. Something to bear in mind is that fasting and prayer are good for us. It’s worth noting that food is only the incidental appetite the devil focusses on. Today, we live with other elements that we consider essential for our survival- electronic media being one. In the wilderness, Jesus is stripped of things that could take up his time in this case, eating. Instead, resisting what his body craves, he embraces the space of nothingness, immersing into a deeper spirituality to hone himself, which will ultimately be for the good of the Kingdom. Or, to use other words, the exercises of self-discipline, self- denial and service enable us to be more open to God’s calling on our particular lives. And thankfully, following the fast there is a feast: Advent to Christmas, Lent to Easter, the return of the prodigal son to the waiting father. When we started to gather physically in the Holburn West sanctuary, following the easing of restrictions, we journeyed with the people of Israel, through the Exodus from slavery in Egypt, through the wilderness, to the promised land. It was certainly not a straightforward journey; starts and stops, rebellion against God’s laws, the challenges faced by Moses, who had been called by God to lead them.

God could see further than they could. There was indeed a land waiting for them, flowing with milk and honey. Following Jesus’ testing time in the desert, there was a fruitful time of his teaching, his life and ministry that brought transformation to many he encountered. Following his suffering and death there was the glory and joy of the Resurrection. Following Paul’s time in the desert he began a dynamic mission across the world, sharing the powerful message of the Gospel.

I firmly believe that good times lie ahead. The journey may be tough and challenging, but we can all do our bit to encourage one another. Some words exchanged here and there, some practical support, some prayers given, can all make a very big difference in what just now, appear to be drab days.

“The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you.

The Lord be gracious to you

and give you His Peace”.

Amen.

from

Rev Duncan C. Eddie