

Meditations For Lent

A study for this season of renewal

by Adrian Eagleson



As we begin our Lenten journey, let us challenge ourselves again by the words of Jesus. Allow yourself time to look at where you are at and where you ought to be. Test your values and see how they stack up against the values that Jesus offers his followers. Each day there will be a selected bible passage along with a short reflection.

Use these next days as an opportunity to engage and grapple with the words of Life. It will be a time of challenge and soul - searching, illumination and inspiration, leading us back to the cross. In Lent the church calls us to 'metanoia', which suggests a change of mind and heart, altering one's mind-set towards whole new ways of thinking and acting. Setting aside this season for spiritual reflection allows us to move towards spiritual growth through a deeper knowledge of God.

Enjoy

Day 1: Give, Pray, Fast (Ash Wednesday 21 February)

Matt 6: 1-18.

Making the needs of others is a priority in the Kingdom of God. Our value system reinforces the view that what is mine is my own; I have worked for it so I get to keep it. Jesus turns this idea upside down with this teaching on giving to the needy. Giving is a key to following Christ, give generously not just with your finances but your talents, time and resources. Lent is a time when many rediscover the discipline and mystery of prayer. Jesus encourages us before we get caught up in the passion and activity that can sometimes come with prayer to discover the quiet place. Before you pray, enter the inner room of your heart. Shut the door on all the noise that assaults you and spend time alone, with the one who knows what you need. Lent is traditionally a time when many abstain from certain foods, drinks or social activities. Fasting is important and a necessary spiritual discipline. It is usually in the times when we willingly deny ourselves that we are able to see more clearly those things that have in a subtle way taken hold of us.

Day 2: Deny Yourself (Thursday 22 February)

Luke 9: 22-25

Suffering and self-denial are not words that many of us like to be reminded are essentials for living the life that Jesus calls us to. The path that we are called to follow will mean that we go against what the world has to offer. Jesus as He walked the path that was marked out for Him faced opposition, persecution, humiliation and separation. As we follow in His footsteps it will be the natural and normal and possibly daily experience of those who take seriously the call to lose our own lives. Allow space today to examine areas that you are holding onto and saving rather than denying yourself. Recognize that in doing this you are missing out on unique opportunities to have your character brought more in line with the Masters.

Day 3: Journey (Friday 23 February)

Matt 9: 14-15

As you journey through this season of Lent, it is like micro versus macro. Insights through these forty days show us how the rhythm of our life flows from communion with the Saviour. In these verses the disciples were reminded of an important truth that as they were on their journeys Christ was with them. There was no time or even need to fast as they enjoyed the intimacy and relationship of quality time with Jesus. It is important to remember that any journey we take is in the company of Jesus. As you travel you will find joy through your relationship with Him. Remind yourself of the peace of God that you have as you walk with Him each day. Take a few moments and visualize Jesus with you in each activity that you undertake today. Reflect on the times when you have felt the presence of God with you in trying or difficult circumstances.

Day 4: The Call (Saturday 24 February)

Luke 5: 27-32

Jesus is in the business of calling out to those in need. What's his call to you today? It's likely that in the busyness of life that call is drowned out, misheard, received only in part or simply forgotten. Matthew heard, he responded and Jesus worked through him. If you are at a point in your life where you are desperate to see Jesus move through you, then why not take time to listen to his call. Find a quiet place and allow Jesus to make the first move. Jesus is here for us and is in the business of healing us emotionally, physically & spiritually.

Day 5: Desert Places (Monday 26 February)

Mark 1: 12-15

In today's Gospel we see that Jesus prepared himself for the up-coming rigors of daily public ministry by setting aside time to be in the wilderness. It was a place of growth, a place of battle, a place of restoration, and a place that gave space for the supernatural to occur. As you continue to use Lent as an opportunity to develop and deepen your spiritual journey, consider how you can prepare yourself for the week ahead. How can you position yourself so that angels can attend to you? Consider today withdrawing to a place that represents your wilderness. Take time to journal and reflect on what God has been drawing up over these past few days.

Day 6: Open Eyes (Tuesday 27 February)

Matt 25: 31-46

The eyes are the lamp of the body, what we look at reveals what we value. When we look at those who we commute with, share a desk, sit beside in a café, what do we see? People who are hungry, needy, thirsty, imprisoned, sick or alienated are all around us. Jesus words cut right to our heart and reveal a de-sensitization to the plight of others. Our faith has much to offer those who are hungry and thirsty for spiritual fulfilment. The cross can bring release to the captive, healing for the sick and comfort to the lonely. Pray today for the eyes of Christ to see the real needs behind those in your natural network of relationships. Determine not to drop a few coins in the beggar's cup but to find out his name, take time to find out how family life is for those you work with. Decide to become involved not detached in people's lives.

Day 7: Do you Care? (Wednesday 28 February)

Luke 11: 29-32

What's going on in the world, indifference and apathy surrounds us, concern for others is no-starter in this competitive, individualized, hi-tech society. Jonah was a prophet who didn't care, his indifference was exactly what God saw and decided to do something about, whilst at the same time bring a nation to its knees. What are

your thoughts on the situation in Iraq? Or the fact that nearly 6,000 Africans die every day from AIDS? What about the level of crime in your local area or the lack of funding for hospitals? As you move out of your position of indifference be prepared like Jonah to be challenged to look at others as God looks at them. Reluctantly, he took the message of grace and mercy to an enemy nation and saw full-blown revival. As we give ourselves over to God and his plans we will be challenged to change our attitudes, values and lifestyles. We may even be like Jonah become agents of change.

Day 8: Ask, Seek, Knock (Thursday 1 March)

Matt 7: 7-12

Christ is showing us the heart of the Father. God is not stingy, selfish or begrudging. As we come to God we are coming to our Heavenly Father. We need to remind ourselves that if humans have the capacity to love, be kind and provide, how much more can God do the same? As we learn to know God better one of the indicators will be in the nature of our prayer life. We learn to pray according to His will, and therefore begin to ask more for those things that are good for us. Our prayers become more mature in the sense that they carry the marks of persistence, boldness and confidence.

Day 9: Attitude Check (Friday 2 March)

Matt 5: 20-26

We are used to putting more value on our actions rather than our attitudes. In our attempts to make excuses for our weakness and tendency to sin we have come up with a system that allows us to be justified in our own minds if we do not commit a sinful act. The words of Jesus cut right to the heart of the matter exposing our human logic and demanding a radical change in not only action but also attitudes. To be angry is to allow a seething brooding bitterness grow towards someone. It is a condition that is volatile, ready to erupt into at any time. The challenge of today's passage is not to simply pat ourselves on the back because we did not lash out physically but to develop the discipline of holding our attitudes in check, under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Day 10: Unconditional Love (Saturday 3 March)

Matt 5: 43-48

As we journey towards the cross and reflect on its message of peace, we are drawn to the words of Jesus exhorting us as to how we should live at peace with those around us. The cross speaks to us of unconditional love. As we allow our attitudes to come under the spot-light of God's word we recognize that our love to others must also be unconditional. As we begin to love and pray for our enemies we begin to see evil being overcome with good. As we move towards maturity in our faith, one of the

markers is our willingness to allow God to become master over those hard areas. To show love and mercy requires a super natural effort, a power from within that only comes through the working of the Holy Spirit. Take time today to pray for those that you would not normally pray for, determine that with the help of the Spirit you will show love to your enemies.

Day 11: Worship versus Activity (Monday 5 March)

Matt 17: 1-13

The three disciples that were with Jesus experienced a little bit of heaven when they were on the Mountain. They were on a journey, learning as they went what it was to live as a follower of Christ. The schedule was sure to be demanding, physically, emotionally and spiritually. The words of Peter are interesting as it parallels what happens with most of us. Here was an opportunity to worship, but Peter was keen to act, to do, to build. He was in danger of missing the moment through activity. Use this season to allow yourself time to worship, to reflect on God's goodness in your life. Create time when you can rest and enjoy the presence of God so that you face the hectic pace of life from a place of refreshing and renewal.

Day 12: Diversions (Tuesday 6 March)

Luke 6: 37-42

We have become experts on each other's lives. Our coffee shop mentality has encouraged us to look at life from a detached viewpoint. Blame is attached to others, shifted around in an effort to avoid the uncomfortable fact that we need to face up to our own shortcomings. Rather than allow ourselves to look in the mirror and see areas that need to be dealt with, we use classic diversionary behaviour criticizing those around us. Usually this criticism is felt most by those we are closely associated with, family member and work colleagues. Determine today to take responsibility for your own actions and avoid the trap of looking at others as means of self-justification or deflection.

Day 13: The Trap of Tradition (Wednesday 7 March)

Matt 23: 1-12

The truth behind the cross is that it brings us into freedom. To live under rules and regulations was a burden for the Jews. The Pharisees had taken the Law and used it to create for themselves a culture of legalism; the laws were obeyed not out of reverence to God but out of tradition. Lent if we are not careful can become something more binding than it should. The desire to journey with God over these days and the heart behind the season can sometimes become hidden behind the traditions. Recommit today that Lent for you is about creating space to come closer to God, allowing your values to be measured against those set down by Jesus.

Examine areas of your faith that you have allowed to be compromised out of a sense of tradition rather than relationship.

Day 14: The Path to Maturity (Thursday 8 March)

Luke 2: 41-51

Reaching the age of maturity was much lower in the Jewish culture, boys aged twelve were considered to be almost an adult. Joseph and Mary like any other parents were anxious when their son could not be found. When they did find him, he was no longer a boy, but a young man able to hold his own and quite comfortable with those around him. It was a time to let go and allow Jesus to move forward in maturity. It may be children, students, workers or dreams that we need to learn to equip, resource and release if we are to follow the journey that Christ took. There comes a time with people and activities that we need to step back and let go. Evaluate how you can be supportive of those around you, determine to allow them to move forward and grow. Ask for God's grace in this difficult task.

Day 15: Redeemed eyes (Friday 9 March)

Luke 16: 19-31

God's heart for the poor is evident, a reminder to us to keep in balance our possessions and the needs of others. The work of redemption in our lives touches our heart for those in need. We begin to see the plight of others and are catalyzed into action. The poor matter, it's as simple as that. What we buy, where we shop, how we live all have huge implications on others. Right from Genesis we have been entrusted with the stewardship of resources. The rich man feasted whilst Lazarus starved. This is not kingdom living, go about your daily chores in a way that you see through redeemed eyes, where you ask God to let you see the needs of those around you. Inform yourself of what is happening in your community, buy a local newspaper or watch the news. Take a walk round your streets, allow the Holy Spirit to show you what on His heart. Let us not be believers who allow others to sit under our tables, not even aware of their presence.

Day 16: A Thankful Heart (Saturday 10 March)

Luke 17: 11-19

To be diagnosed a leper in the times of Jesus meant social exclusion and isolation. Luke says that the lepers 'stood at a distance' and called out to Jesus. Their condition placed barriers on their relationships. The cross reminds us of our spiritual condition and broken relationships with God. Through the work on Calvary we no longer need to stand a distance from God but enjoy the true intimacy of a personal relationship. Only one of the lepers took time to thank Jesus for his healing, he threw himself at his feet in appreciation. Lent allows us the opportunity to check our response to the salvation we have, it tests to see if we have a thankful heart. Take

time today to thank Jesus for the privilege of being able to approach the throne of God with 'boldness and confidence'.

Day 17: The Principle of One (Monday 12 March)

Luke 15

Three parables but the same message, God is interested in individuals. Look at those you travel with on the bus today, share an office with or stand with in the canteen at lunch. Do you know the stories behind the faces or in the busyness of life have they all blurred into one? One sheep goes missing, big deal there are ninety-nine others, yet to the Shepherd each one is significant. To the woman in Palestine losing one of a set of ten silver coins was like losing a wedding ring. Frantic searching the only response. As a wayward son returns the father throws dignity to the wind and runs to meet his boy. Go and take a look in the mirror, you are significant, more than a face in the crowd, you are in God's economy valuable. In God's eyes you are worth getting excited about. Determine today to look afresh at others and see their potential. Why not compliment someone and see how they respond.

Day 18: Clutter (Tuesday 13 March)

John 2: 13-25

For many Lent is a time of reduction and removal. We look at areas that need to be pared back and those things that have invaded our lives and need to be removed. It tends to be a much needed time out to reassess and take action. Jesus looked around the temple grounds, he saw ordinary people who came with the desire to worship yet were distracted by the call of the money changers and merchants. It was time for action, a removal of those things that were offensive to him. His anger was evident, his resolve without doubt. To move towards unhurried and undivided worship we need to clear away those things, which have become useless clutter, apparent necessities in our sophisticated lives. Lifestyles, diaries and priorities may need readjusting as we reassess those things we have allowed inside our temple walls.

Day 19: The Secret of the Garden (Wednesday 14 March)

Matt 26: 36-45

No thoughts on the journey to the cross would be complete without looking at the theme of rejection. The thought of his Father turning from him was almost too much for Jesus as he prayed in the garden, yet from deep within he found the power and strength to continue on. When we face rejection it rips right to our very core, we withdraw from others, fearful of further pain and misery. Rejection happens to all of us, for in choosing to follow Christ we choose to experience the 'fellowship of sharing in his sufferings'. As we turn our back on the secular values of our culture we invite

rejection and hostility from those such actions threaten. The key to walking this path is the secret of the garden. Peace and renewal through prayer. As you experience opposition from others, determine to see it through with 'prayers, petitions, thanksgivings and requests'.

Day 20: The mystery of the cross (Thursday 15 March)

Luke 1: 26-38

The message of Easter takes us back today to Mary's encounter with Gabriel. The words she heard were nearly incomprehensible, God's Son was about to show up on earth, and Mary was chosen to be the mother! What an honour, what a responsibility! How many times would Mary keep coming back to the mystery of God sending His Son to save His people? I wonder if she ever got to the point of fully understanding all that had happened? The message of the cross can never be fully understood by our finite minds, we are limited by experience and intellect. Allow yourself space today to consider the wonder of Jesus incarnate, rejoice in the mystery that is contained in the gospel and take time to thank God for revealing His love to you through His Son's death. Let the wonder of the cross be your meditation.

Day 21: Obstacles (Friday 16 March)

Luke 19: 1-10

The story of Zacchaeus brings a word of warning to us as we journey towards a deeper relationship with God. As we focus on our values and behaviour we are reminded of those people we have in our network of relationships who like Zacchaeus, want to see who Jesus is. The problem for Zacchaeus was not that he was short but rather other people were preventing him from getting a good view of this man who was the talk of the town. Too many of us have been responsible for getting in the way. Our efforts and agendas divert desperate peoples' gaze away from the wonder of really seeing Christ. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to those who are seeking and for wisdom to be an effective witness for the kingdom.

Day 22: Offer and Request (Saturday 17 March)

Luke 18: 35-43

Looking at the life of Jesus we see him surrounded by people who were in need, real need. Story after story shows us his love and compassion and desire to help others. The voice of the oppressed was one that Jesus managed to hear above all the other noise and activity that demanded His attention. His response was a simple question 'what do you want me to do for you?'. Jesus did not assume that he knew what the man wanted but allowed him the dignity of making a request on the basis of an offer. Why not take time today to make some offers to people, allow them to request what it is you can do for them, this is the Kingdom at work empowering and respecting those whose voice might otherwise not get heard.

Day 23: Love Overspill (Monday 19 March)

Mark 12: 28-34

Living in harmony within a society requires us to understand, respect and work within the boundaries of what are predetermined laws. The Kingdom of God is no different, with Jesus clearly pointing out an important principle of love overspill. To love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength is at the very core of what we believe. But so also is the matter of that love relationship spilling out and impacting others. To be impacted by the Father's love should bring us to the throne in worship but also compel us to take that love to those around us and allow them to experience it's height, breath and depth. Love is three dimensional, not just to be experienced exclusively but shared collectively. Make sure you allow for some love overspill in your spiritual and physical relationships.

Day 24: Personal Space (Tuesday 20 March)

Luke 18: 9-14

Space is important, stand too close to someone and you will see him or her become uncomfortable, agitated and nervous. You have invaded their personal space. Today's society teaches us to keep people at arms length, rationalizing that it's all about security and respect. Unfortunately the same mentality is too easily transferred to our relationship with God the Father. We wait for an invite, or assume that it's not ok to draw close, that somehow God would want us to be in relationship but not quite commit to moving into closer intimacy. The tax collector we read 'stood at a distance', what a sad picture. The cross allows us free access to the Throne Room, not because of anything we have done but because of Jesus' death. Take time to evaluate your walk with the Lord and see if you are close in or still at a distance.

Day 25: Plans (Wednesday 21 March)

John 3: 14-21

God's mercy mission to mankind was intentional. Seeing the slide of humanity from close relationship to enemy broke the Father's heart and brought about a plan for rescue. The rest as we say is history. During this Lenten season, you have likely made numerous plans, considering why and how you are going to use this time to deepen your walk with the Lord. What plans do you need to put in place in response to the needs that you will come across today? Fail to prepare, prepare to fail is a great maxim, God didn't fail to prepare for the life of Christ on earth, John the Baptist was even sent to prepare the way. Recognize that unless you seek to put in place those things that need to happen they will not, simple fact of life. Take timeout and look ahead, what are your plans that will help bring peace on earth.

Day 26: Deep Faith (Thursday 22 March)

John 4: 43-54

We are always looking for the catch, the hidden clause, and the small print that will end up with us coming out worst. Our education, upbringing and experiences in life yell out at us – don't trust them! In today's reading we see a man who had little knowledge but great faith. He not only believed that Jesus could heal, he also obeyed by returning home, therefore showing his complete faith. The passage says he 'took Jesus at his word and departed'. It is not enough simply to believe that Jesus can sort a problem out, we need to live it out. Take some time today and look up what the Word of God has to say about areas in your life – health, family, hope, salvation, and finances. You chose whether to take God at his word and develop a deeper faith; maybe if we did we would get the results this man did.

Day 27: Samaria (Friday 23 March)

John 4: 1-15

Technology has brought us to a place where it is easy to cut yourself off from society. You can shop, bank and conduct your business affairs all from the comfort of your own home via the Internet highway. All too often we fall into the same trap when it comes to our Christian witness, we allow ourselves to live in a culture that is not in touch with life in the real world. Jesus took time to be transparent in his faith, always ready to share and always ready to show the Kingdom in action. To return back to Galilee, Jesus 'had to go through Samaria'; he used this opportunity to bring hope to a wayward woman and revival to a town. The mandate of our faith is that we have to go through our own Samaria's. Ask yourself the question today, what do you need to do to allow the gospel to shine through you, are there people or places others might not normally go that you need to go through to bring the good news to desperate people? Determine that you will live your faith in the context of community not isolation.

Day 28: Real Food (Saturday 24 March)

John 4: 27- 38

The woman at the well came with an everyday household chore to perform and went away an instrument for revival. She was so captivated by her encounter with Jesus that she rushed back to her family and friends without her water jar. There was something far more important to do! Time with the Lord allows us to gain a fresh perspective of what is really important in life. For Jesus these life-changing meetings with ordinary people were his source of spiritual nourishment and satisfaction. This season of Lent is all about life-change. As you meditate and act on the values that Jesus models out you will not be the same. For many it will be a case of gaining new vision and sense of purpose. Perhaps you are using this time to abstain from certain foods or activities, remember however to include the food that Jesus desired – 'to do

the will of him who sent me and finish his work'. When you do this you will experience the peace of Christ.

Day 29: Wise Words (Monday 26 March)

Luke 20: 1-8, 20-26

The need to always have an answer, and not just any answer but the right one is a tremendous burden to have to carry. Jesus always had to be on his guard against the well thought out arguments of the Jewish leaders, who constantly challenged him on the question of his authority. We see him in today's passage being able to see through their schemes and come out the other side with his reputation not only intact but beyond repute. It is no different for us today, business colleagues, school friends and family members are all looking and waiting, ready for us to slip up. A wrong word, a careless phrase might be all they need to be able to come back at you and attack your credibility. Before venturing out into your day, take time and ask God to give you wisdom to deal with the situations you will encounter today.

Day 30: Hard Words (Tuesday 27 March)

John 6: 60 – 71

Often the best journeys are the ones that we invest heavily in with our time, finances, resources and energies. The same is true of our Christian walk; it calls for sacrifice and surrender and demands much of us. For some it is too much, with those who followed Jesus and heard his teachings, there came a point when enough was enough, the line was waiting to be crossed. Their response 'this is a hard teaching, who can accept it?'. They made a decision that resulted in them turning back and no longer following Him. What about you, having decided to listen to the words of Jesus, are you now in a place where you are challenged to walk in full obedience to all He asks of you. It doesn't matter how long you have been on the journey, radical holiness requires us to allow ourselves to be constantly open to the truth of Kingdom living. Do not turn back; rather push on in obedience even when it seems so very, very hard.

Day 31: Perfect timing (Wednesday 28 March)

John 7: 1-15

Jesus' brothers thought that it would be good for him to go up to Jerusalem and openly show his miraculous powers at work. Their logic was simple, if you want to be a public figure and get a following then you need to be in the limelight. Jesus on the other hand resists their demands and goes about his business safe in the knowledge that he will be in the right place at the right time. There is a quiet calmness and order to the life of Christ, when many sought to lead him one way or the other, he simply went about his mission, focused and deliberate. What a great lesson, Jesus goes to the Feast and at the proper moment and in the right manner begins to teach. It takes

a lifetime to learn to live out the lifestyle that Jesus modelled. Learn to move at the pace of the Master's timing, not the clamour and demands of those around you who 'always seem to know best'.

Day 32: Letting Things Die (Thursday 29 March)

John 12: 20 – 33

Jesus knew what lay before him, he went forward to the cross knowing full well what was about to happen and importantly why it had to be this way. Because he was human he dreaded it, knowing that he would have to take the sins of the world on his shoulders and face separation from his Father. Jesus said no to his human desires in order to obey the calling on his life. The illustration of the kernel of wheat holds an important lesson as we journey in our Christian lives, some things need to die if they are to grow! Throughout this season of Lent we are allowing ourselves to come under the microscope of the Word to deepen our walk with Christ. Pause today and ask yourself if there is anything that needs to die in order for you to grow in your spiritual life? Letting things go is a natural part of the Christian experience.

Day 33: Self-Aware (Friday 30 March)

John 8: 1-11

Self-awareness is buzz -word used in many seminars, conferences and training courses nowadays. Yet back in the New Testament we see how religious leaders when challenged to examine their own lives became acutely aware of their own sinfulness. But look at the order they left, first the old and then those younger. It seems the older men were more aware of their sins than the younger, 'age and experience often hold in check youthful self-righteousness'. Learn to be honest in looking at your life, recognize your sinful nature and like the religious leaders act when you become aware of issues that need dealt with. The great truth behind this passage is the tenderness and compassion of Jesus when dealing with the woman's obvious sin. He is there to forgive not condemn.

Day 34: Focus on the Above (Saturday 31 March)

John 8: 21 – 30

The people were having a hard time understanding the message behind Jesus' words. Their earthly worldview was leaving them little or no room to have a different perspective on things. Jesus tried to address the issue by putting it plainly, 'you are from below, I am from above'. There were some things that they just would not be able to grasp unless they took a step of faith and believed. Be careful that you do not limit the work and ministry open to you by holding onto a distorted worldly view. People, experience and logic will all scream out at you that it is not possible, but remember to focus on the above! Remind yourself of this fact every time doubt, fear and negativity attack you, focus on the above!

Day 35: Remember Your Roots (Monday 2 April)

John 8: 31-42

Jewish ancestry was an important part of their culture, a people proud of who they were, where they had come from and the future promised to them. The religious feasts were designed to remind the people of how God had brought them out of slavery and into the Promised Land; it was time for story telling and celebration, a chance to remind themselves of their rich heritage as descendants of Abraham. The cross allows us to meditate on our own position as sons and daughters of the Father. We have been adopted into His Family and enjoy the privilege of calling Him Abba Father. Take time today to remind yourself of your place in the family, think through your own 'Passover' story and how the Lord is leading you to your place of inheritance. Gather some other believers and share your stories, declaring the Lord's goodness and faithfulness.

Day 36: Humility (Tuesday 3 April)

John 8: 48-59

Crosses come in all shapes and sizes, some are brightly coloured and worn around our necks, others magnificently carved and placed in churches or public places. Sometimes in our well-intentioned efforts we make the cross seem more acceptable by what we place on or around it. Jesus in his life modelled out true humility, we see him with the Jews stating 'I am not seeking glory for myself'. In our desire to show people Christ we can sometimes feel the pressure to add to the message of the gospel. Jesus by seeking to serve was confident that God would do the rest and not only work through him but also show his glory through him. Reassure yourself today that all you need to do is place yourself at God's disposal and allow him to do the rest.

Day 37: Being Misunderstood (Wednesday 4 April)

John 10: 31-42

Speaking out and being misunderstood is a frustrating experience, we feel the need to go back and justify ourselves, trying to put a perception right to get our point across. Many misunderstood Jesus, they failed to put the story together and come to the conclusion that he was indeed the Messiah. In the reading from John's gospel, we see that after the Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy he left the area and went across the Jordan, where many people came to him and believed. It seems that the lifestyle and power behind his ministry were just too compelling for folks to stay away. Take heart today that there will be those who might not understand all that you do or say, but the witness of a consistent lifestyle full of the power of the Spirit will mean that they do not stay away for good. Ask God to grant you the patience to love not speak when you feel the need to justify your faith.

Day 38: Perfect Timing (Thursday 5 April)

John 11: 1-15

Patience is a virtue and one that many of us could do with having more of! Imagine the despair and hurt of Mary and Martha when they learned of the delayed response of Jesus to their brother's sickness. Their feelings and experiences convinced them that Jesus was their answer but needed to show up quick. He remained however where he was for a further two days, going about his business seemingly unconcerned. His delay had a specific purpose. God's timing especially when there are delays make us think that he is not answering our prayers. The discipline of patience is a hard one to master. When the time was right Jesus wasted no time in returning to Bethany to bring hope to a desperate situation. Recommit today to the fact that God hears our prayers; he knows the future and answers according to his timeline, which is perfect.

Day 39: Close in Worship (Friday 6 April)

Mark 11: 1-10

As we enter Holy Week let us look at the picture of Jesus' entry to Jerusalem. It was one of joy, jubilation and rejoicing. For the people there was at last a hope that the Messiah had come, they were looking for release from the rule of the Romans and the coming of the Kingdom of God. People laid down their coats as an act of worship and reverence, others cut down branches to give them something to wave in the midst of all the euphoria. It is an engaging account of a gathering that has its place in history and hope in the future. One day we will be caught up in the excitement of being able to worship and praise the Lord whilst in his midst. True worship involves us in the laying down of some things. Take time out today and allow yourself to worship the Lord. What do you need to lay down to down in order to draw close to the Lord?

Day 40: Selfish Motives (Saturday 7 April)

John 12: 1-11

The story of the woman anointing Jesus with perfume exposes the heart and attitude of Judas. Caught up in his greed he is unable to see the act as one of worship and humility. For him it is a waste of resources, the perfume could have been sold, a few poor people might have benefited and of course he would have been able to line his own pocket. His own selfishness gets in the way and eventually leads to betrayal. It's impossible to put a value on worship, yet for many it is seen as irrelevant and certainly not necessary. As we come to the end of our Lenten journey, determine that you will make time at the master's feet a priority. Look at your lifestyle, your diary, and your resources and see if you are being selfish in wanting to hold onto them for your own benefit. True worship will always expose what is in our hearts.

Day 41: Not by Ourselves (Monday 9 April)

John 13: 21-33, 36-38

We all like to think that we would be calm in the face of danger and calculated when it comes to making split second decisions. Experience tells us a different story; we crumble, usually making a mess of things. Peter was no different, confident in his own ability he assured Jesus of his commitment to the end, even to the point of death. We learn from his story not to be hasty in making promises that we can't keep and mindful of our capacity to get things so very wrong. We need to pray and ask for strength so that we are equipped to live out our faith. When we depend on our own abilities and talents we move our dependence in God to independence from God. Jesus prayed that we would not be left on our own when he returned to heaven because he knew that we would not be able to handle it. The Holy Spirit has been sent as our guide, counsellor and helper as we seek to follow Jesus. Thank God for sending his Spirit to help us and examine your life and see if you are dependent on his guiding.

Day 42: Be on your Guard (Tuesday 10 April)

Matthew 26: 14-25

The story of Judas must be one of the saddest accounts in the bible, a man who knew Jesus yet was ready to give him up to further his own position. When he realized that the Kingdom was spiritual not physical, he was tempted by his love of money and sold Jesus for the price of a slave. Disillusionment had set in and he became easy prey for Satan to exploit his weakness. As we finish this season of Lent, take time to look at areas of your life that you need to guard against attacks from the enemy. For many of us we have too many friends who once enjoyed walking close with the Lord but are now far away. The enemy is a thief and comes only to steal, destroy and kill. Ask for God's protection and wisdom that you might be able to stand against all attacks. For many Christians a time of opposition comes at the end of a season given over to seeking God. It was the same for Jesus coming out of the wilderness. Look back over these past forty days and the words that God has spoken to you. Learn to use the truths and promises of scripture to counter the words of Satan. Stand firm and move into the rest of Holy Week assured that you are one of God's children, allowing the wonder of the cross to be your meditation.