

March 2025 Edition 109

**He was in the wilderness forty days, tested by Satan.** Mark 1.13



Ash Wednesday marks the start of our journey through Lent. The liturgy for the Ash Wednesday service reminds us that Lent is a time for taking to heart the call to repentance and the assurance of God's forgiveness proclaimed in the Gospel, and so grow in faith and in devotion to our Lord.

As the ashes are placed on our foreheads in the sign of the cross, we hear the rather chilling words

Remember that you are dust,  
and to dust you shall return.

Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.

They remind us of the reality of our human condition. We think not just of our own mortality but of our world, especially in today's turmoil and uncertainty in so many places, and how far it is from the kingdom of God, a kingdom which we pray earnestly will come on earth.

We see and hear all the time of the destructive forces which seem to be so powerfully at work among people throughout the world – forces which divide and destroy, which place people in situations of violence, oppression, poverty and so on.

Lent is the time when we reflect upon these things, and upon our ourselves. How might we change in order to make the world a better place? What might we do to help to bring in God's kingdom of justice, love and peace?

In order to find some answers we follow our Lord into the wilderness. And like him, we start that journey at the point of our baptism. Jesus went into the wilderness immediately after he was baptised when the Holy Spirit descended upon him and he heard the voice of God saying: This is my Son, my beloved, in whom I am well pleased. And so it was at our baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon us, and the voice of God said to us: “You are my beloved daughter/son, with whom I am well pleased.” Another translation is “in whom I delight”.

So we begin our journey into the wilderness carrying with us that knowledge of the love of God for us that we can hardly comprehend. “You are my son/my daughter, I delight in you.”

Notice it’s the Holy Spirit – so active at our baptism and at Jesus’ baptism – who is the one who leads us into the wilderness. ‘The Spirit immediately drove Jesus out into the wilderness’ Luke tells us. And the question is why?



I wonder how you view the wilderness – whether you see it as a bleak and hostile place, or whether you see it as a place of growth – of discovery – a place of self-discovery and a place to find God.

In biblical terms the wilderness is certainly that. Hagar, the servant of Sarah, pregnant with Abraham’s son, ran away into the wilderness. (Genesis 16: 7-10) where she meets an angel of God who tells her to return home with the promise of God’s blessing.

The Israelites under Moses wandered for 40 years in the wilderness before coming to the promised Land – again it was a place of learning, of discovery, of dialogue with God, of blessing – they received manna from heaven – and it led eventually to promised land - the land of milk and honey.

Elijah also flees into the wilderness (1 Kings 19: 4) where he is fed by God, and then discovers the presence of God in the sheer silence of that place.

So the wilderness, biblically, is a place of restoration – a place of meeting with God.

**So what does this all mean for us**, metaphorically called as we are into the wilderness during this season of Lent? For let us be assured that we **are** being led into it. The wilderness journey is a journey inwards. It's a solitary journey of self-discovery. But it's also a journey where we find God.

So the journey inward enables us to confront those layers that hide Christ in us. For we are all of us hurt and wounded for all sorts of reasons - perhaps through our own fault, or through no fault of our own.

We may be crippled by the fact that we haven't fully taken on the gift of our baptism – we haven't really heard the voice of God calling us his beloved children. Or we may have heard it and know it intellectually – but it hasn't made that journey from head to heart – often called the longest journey in the world.

One thing we do know, this journey through Lent is not made alone. We make it together, supporting and caring for each other every step of the way. And Christ, our Saviour, walks with us. He has been there, he knows all about the wilderness, and he will lead us through it to new life, the promise of Easter.

May God bless us all with courage and hope this Lent.

*Maggie Marsh*



## March Services and Events

Saturday 1	09.00	Men's Breakfast at Horton Golf Park
Sunday 2	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Sung Communion and Children's Groups
Monday 3	14.00	Candidates see parish & meet key people
	18.30	PCC supper with the candidates
Tuesday 4	-	Candidates' Formal Interviews
Wednesday 5	20.00	Ash Wednesday Sung Communion
Sunday 9	09.30	Sung Communion
		<b>Final Day for Returning Electoral Roll Forms</b>
	18.30	Deanery Confirmation at Cuddington
Monday 10	19.30	Knit & Natter in the Leverton Room
Thursday 13	14.30	Thursday Club at the Garden Centre
Saturday 15	10.00	Women's Group in the Cuddington Hall
	19.00	Parish Quiz Night
Sunday 16	09.30	Sung Communion and Children's Groups
Wednesday 19	20.00	PCC in the Cuddington Hall
Sunday 23	09.30	Sung Communion
Sunday 30	09.30	Mothering Sunday Parade Service
	10.45	Homemade Sunday

Morning Prayer is said in church every weekday morning at 9am.

