A Journey to the Holy Land

Lent course 2019

Led by Rev'd Sue Martin

Introduction to The Holy Land

Undertaking a journey of faith…

The Holy Land is the place in which Jesus grew up and carried out his ministry. It is an area about the size of Wales, although it has many different parts.

Physically it is set on the edge, the edge of the Mediterranean and Europe, the edge of The Middle East and Africa.

The valley of the River Jordan is a rift valley and is the deepest valley in the world. It develops from the Sea of Galilee and continues to the Dead Sea. Further south it reaches the Red Sea.

It is featured many time in the Old and New Testament. It continues to this day to be a place of friction and war.

We are looking at four main areas of; Galilee, Nazareth, Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

Sacred places, walking in the footsteps of Jesus, 2000 years on in our own time with changes and challenges but still a deep sense of God's presence.

Week 1. The Sea of Galilee

The Sea of Galilee is a very large freshwater lake bordered on the west by Tiberias, Capernaum and Magdala. On the other side are the Golan Heights.

This is a lake of immense peace and even now when people flock to take a boat out on the lake, the peace is almost touchable. At times, because of its geography. Storms appear from nowhere.

This is where Jesus came to find his first disciples, the fishermen, Simon, Andrew, James and John.

This is where Jesus feeds the five thousand.

This is where Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount.

This is where Jesus meets Mary Magdalene.

This is where Jesus asked Peter three times to lead his sheep.

On the shores of the lake you can walk on the very same pebbles that Jesus would have walked on.

Early in the morning as the sun rises over the Golan Heights you know that Jesus would have watched a similar sunrise.

Read together

Luke 5: 1-11 Jesus Calls his First Disciples

Luke 6:20-23 The Sermon on the Mount

Luke 7:1, Jesus Heals a Roman Servant's Son

Luke 8:1, Women who followed Jesus

Luke 8:22 Jesus Calms a Storm

Luke 9: 10-15, The Feeding of the Five Thousand

Possible Reflections

- The shores of Lake Galilee were the place where Jesus started his ministry, grew his disciples, gathered crowds to him, performed miracles and healing. What enabled him to sustain his time there?
- Spend a few minutes looking at the pictures and imagine yourself on the Lake or by the shores, walking on the pebble.
- Immerse your thoughts in that time and know that Jesus was there, only 4 hours away from us and 2000 years ago. And yet He is still with us.
- The feeding of the five thousand was set on a hill above the shores of Lake Galilee, how would Jesus have felt after performing the miracle and how would the people have realised that more and more food was appearing from the baskets?
- Jesus reappears to Peter and the fishermen after the resurrection, three times he asks Peter. How often does He have to ask us?

Prayers

In the stillness
I look for you and I long for you
In my idleness
I watch for you and I wait for you
Our lives are interwoven
Use me as you will
We are always together
In you I am strong
Every strand of my life
Is filled with your presence
In your hands, my life
Has purpose and meaning
Hold me close, Lord
With freedom of Love Anon

The Lord's Prayer

Week 2 Cana, Mount Tabor and Nazareth

In our second week we look at places between Sea of Galilee and Bethlehem and Jerusalem, Cana, Mount Tabor and Nazareth. They all have very specific reasons why they are important in the story of the life of Jesus.

The distance between the Sea of Galilee and Nazareth is only about 20 miles, which is not far by coach or car but still a distance if you are walking as Jesus and his disciples would have been.

They had left the Sea of Galilee but were still in Galilee itself.

In this area we have a few stories and we are looking this week at the gospel of Matthew so will be focussing on other aspects, as well as the area itself.

Cana is the scene of the first miracle that Jesus performed.

Mount Tabor is the scene of the Transfiguration.

Nazareth is the place where Jesus family were based and returned to bring up their family.

Nazareth is the home of Jesus as a child, where he would have grown up learning the trade of a carpenter with Joseph.

This is where you can have a sense of place for the family. It is where you can reflect on the closeness from Mt Tabor to the clouds and the appearance of Elijah and Moses.

Readings from Matthew to read together

- Matthew 9: 9-13 Jesus visits the house of Matthew the tax collector
- Matthew 11: 20-24 The Unbelieving towns
- Matthew 11: 25- end Come to me and Rest
- Matthew 13: 10-17 Parables
- Matthew 13: 53- end Nazareth rejects Jesus
- Matthew 17: 1-13 The Transfiguration

Possible Reflections

- How did people react to Jesus when he spoke with Matthew? How does this have similarities today on difference?

- What causes us to have unbelief? How often do we need proof of something before we can believe? Think of a time when you had to trust in someone else.

- How powerful is this phrase? Lent is a time for rest or is it a time for us to be just as busy as always?

- The parables were the way Jesus could start to explain about the kingdom and God. What examples are there of ways in which we can understand things that are complex?

- Only a few of the disciples are taken to Mount Tabor. Why do you think this was? Peter's reaction was interesting, what does it show us about his character?

Prayer

In the stillness
I look for you and I long for you
In my idleness
I watch for you and I wait for you
Our lives are interwoven
Use me as you will
We are always together
In you I am strong
Every strand of my life
Is filled with your presence
In your hands, my life
Has purpose and meaning
Hold me close, Lord

Amen

We say The Lord's Prayer together…

A Journey to the Holy Land

Lent course 2019

Led by Rev'd Sue Martin

Week 3 Bethlehem

In our third week we are looking at Bethlehem.

Bethlehem in the land of Judah is mentioned many times in the Bible, often referred to in the Old Testament. Bethlehem, or Ephratha, is about 6 miles to the south of Jerusalem.

It is the place where Rachel was buried. Rachel, the second wife of Jacob and the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, two of the twelve leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Bethlehem is the place of the birth of Jesus, as Mary and Joseph had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be registered as Joseph was in the line of David and of Jacob

Bethlehem today stands in an isolated place, close to Jerusalem but heavily bordered by Israel and set as separate for the Palestinians as part of the Occupied Palestinians Territories (1967).

This week we will also think about our neighbours, who are they?

Readings from Matthew and Mark

- Matthew 1: 1- 3, 16-18
- Matthew 2: 1-7
- Mark 1 : 1-13
- Mark: 10:46- end
- Mark: 11:1-13

Possible Reflections

- The family tree of Jesus, have you ever looked at your family trees and how far back does it go? How amazing that the family tree is recorded right back to Abraham? Is that coincidence or in God's plan?
- Jesus was born in Jerusalem where his mother and father had to travel to from their own home town. How difficult would it be now for a Palestinian Christian to travel away from Bethlehem?
- God says love your neighbour as yourself…
- A first experience of living in a camp surrounded by guards who shoot at you is a silencing experience.
- The church of the Nativity is in Manger Square, Bethlehem. At the other end of the square is a mosque. Love your neighbour is acting this out from one side of the square to the other, or is it?

Prayers

Father, Thank you for life. Thank you for people.

Thank you for our differences and our shared humanity.

Although we are different we are all the same. We share the same needs, desires, hopes and hurts.

In Bethlehem, so many years ago our Saviour was born, and now we learn of the barriers that exist in that town.

We pray for all those who go between Bethlehem and Jerusalem every day and we pray for the guards who let them on their way.

Father, hear our prayer. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

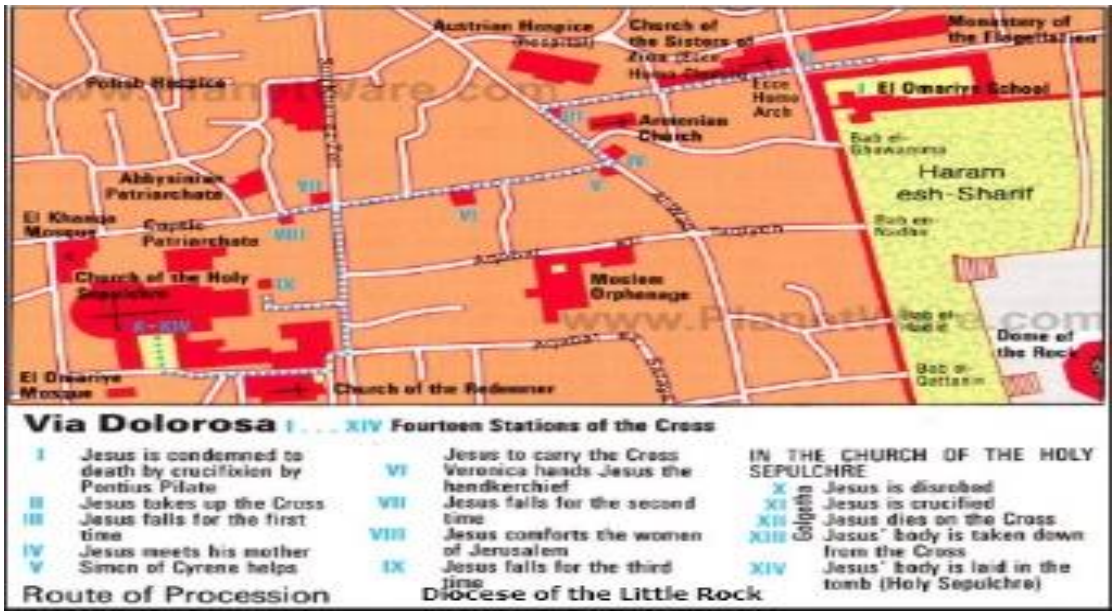
A Journey to the Holy Land

Lent course 2019

Led by Rev'd Sue Martin

Week 4 Jerusalem

In our fourth week we are looking at Jerusalem.



From being with Jesus in The Sea of Galilee calling his disciples and starting his missions with preaching and healing, we moved to Nazareth and Mount Tabor. Then on to Bethlehem, the place of Jesus' birth and still a place of conflict and tension.

This last week we look at Jerusalem, a special city and again a city of conflict for the three Abrahamic faiths of Christians, Jews and Muslims.

Jesus travelled here and knew what the outcome would be. We also know that outcome but his disciples did not. We read about their journey with Jesus from the Garden of Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives and on to Jerusalem in triumph on a colt donkey.

Jesus journeyed into Jerusalem having crossed the valley, he would easily have been seen by the Jewish leaders and the Romans. In Jerusalem he had crowds who gathered palm leaves and called Hosanna, to the Highest.

Journey with us through the Gate of St Stephen and into Jerusalem, join the crowds of people, the soldiers, the Jews at the Western Wall, the Muslims at the Golden Dome Mosque. Walk with us along the Via Dolorosa and on to Golgotha.

And then from your own journey, see that this is not the end but the beginning.

Readings from John

- **John 10: 1-18**
- **John 12: 12-20**
- **John 13: 1-11**
- **John 15: 12-18**
- **John 18: 1-11**

Possible reflections and thoughts

- I am the good shepherd, do you have an example of when Jesus gathered you into the flock?
- What were the disciples expecting? Which disciples do you think were disappointed? What happens when you feel let down?
- Washing of feet, how can we let Jesus do things for us?
- I am the true vine, can we find the answer to everything in this passage?
- Being deceived, how did Jesus react when Judas showed him to the soldiers?
- Where to from here?
- How do we let God into our lives?

Palm Sunday and Holy Week are powerful times in our Christian faith. As we approach the end of Lent how can we enter into Palm Sunday with triumph, walk with Jesus in Holy Week and onto the Via Dolorosa and the carrying of the cross.

Then journey forward on Easter Sunday when the Good News of Jesus Resurrection is there for us all.

Prayers.

God is love; let heaven adore him,

God is love, let earth rejoice;

God's eternal loving kindness, hold and guide us when we fall.

Sin and hell and death shall never, Over us gain the final triumph.

God is Love, so love for ever, over the universe to remain. Amen

The Lord's Prayer