



Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney's Lent Course 2024

# THE WAY TO THE CROSS

MONDAY 11 MARCH



## GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IN DRAWING US CLOSER

Themes in the readings for the Fourth Sunday of Lent include God's faithfulness in drawing us closer.

In the reading from the Book of Numbers (Numbers 21.4-9) we hear about Moses, the serpent and a pole. This is the narrative referenced in the Gospel reading for this Sunday. The Book of Numbers continues the history of the people of the Israel after their exodus from Egypt (the Book of Exodus) and their journey to the promised land, land God promised to their fathers (they reach this in the Book of Joshua). In the Book of Numbers we hear the people of Israel's complaints and moans about the time in the wilderness and their murmurings. There are five murmurings explicitly mentioned, of which Numbers 21.4-9 is one.

Numbers contains stories of the Israelites rebelling against God but God is faithful to them and keeps the promises made. In this complaint story we see God being faithful again. The people are complaining, there was no decent food or drink and poisonous serpents were sent and killed people. However, in verse seven the people realise they need to change their ways and approach Moses, their leader. By turning to face the serpent on the stick, the people were healed, they showed faith and remembered the promises of God.

Psalm 107 is a psalm of praise. It contains seven stanzas (sections) which all praise enthusiastically the constant, steadfast, love of God. Selected for this Sunday are verses 1-3 and 17-22.

Collect for  
Fourth Sunday of  
Lent

Gracious Father,  
whose blessed Son  
Jesus Christ came  
from heaven to be  
the true bread which  
gives life to the  
world, evermore give  
us this bread, that he  
may live in us, and  
we in him, who lives  
and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and  
for ever.  
Amen.

Each section of Psalm 107 speaks of God's love, God's faithfulness to humanity in different ways. Each of the sections (including those used in the lectionary for the Fourth Sunday of Lent) speak of occasions where people in physical and spiritual peril were delivered from the situation, people in the wilderness guided to an oasis, prisoners given freedom, seafarers experiencing a storm and being delivered to a safe harbour, and the portion in verses 17-22 speaks to the healing of the sick and dying.

The portion from Ephesians (2.1-10) speaks about grace and faith. This section is from the part to the Church in Ephesus (in modern day Turkey) instructing people how to live. The author of the letter is disputed, the subject matter is very like that of the Apostle Paul but the writing style, being more deliberate and ornate, is not. A key part of the passage is Ephesians 2.8-10. It is by faith that we are saved, not by what we do but what is in our hearts and souls, what the intentionality is behind our actions and what governs how we live in the world. The author reminds us that we are God's handiwork and called to a new way of living.

The portion of John's Gospel appointed for the Fourth Sunday of Lent contains one of the most famous verses in Christian scripture, John 3.16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.". This is taken from a conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus (John 3.1-21). Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a member of the Jewish ruling council who had heard of Jesus and wanted to find out more. So Nicodemus visited Jesus at night and asked questions about the Kingdom of God, why Jesus can do the things he does - the signs of God's power, and what this means. Jesus speaks of Moses, the snake and the wilderness (Numbers, the reading appointed for this Sunday).

Jesus speaks of light and darkness, of seeking to be people who love light not darkness. God's faithfulness to God's people in the wilderness, through the experiences of the Psalmist and in the incarnation of Jesus thread through the readings for the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

*John 3.16*

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## *Usual Weekly Pattern*

Sunday  
RCL Eucharist  
Readings and Collect

Monday  
Delving Deeper into the Readings

Tuesday  
Words from Others  
(sacred & secular)

Wednesday  
Resources from the Arts

Thursday  
Contemplative Acts

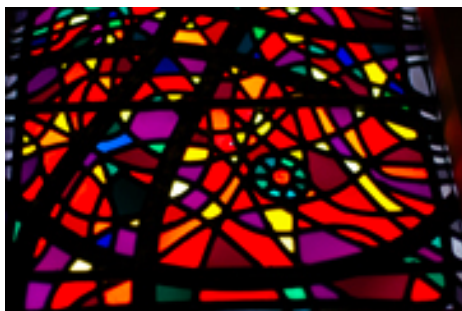
Friday  
Personal Reflection  
- what this means to me

Saturday  
Acts & Deeds



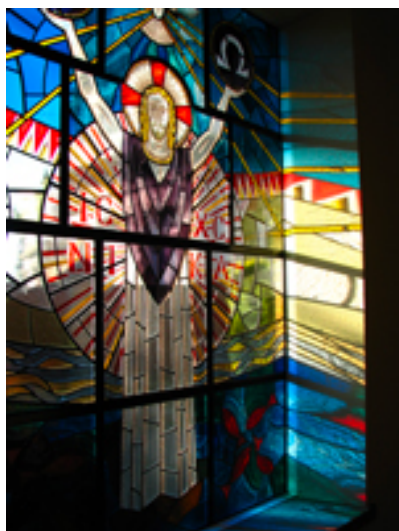
## QUESTIONS TO REFLECT

- Psalm 107 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving speaking of the psalmist's experience of God's deliverance for them and their community. Read the whole of Psalm 107 and what are things that you gives thanks for? You may wish to write your own Psalm following the structure of Psalm 107: introductions, accounts of God's faithfulness followed by a summary.



- In Numbers the people of Israel are murmuring and mumbling about what is happening to them as they travel through the wilderness, As we reach the mid-point of Lent what are your murmurings and mumblings about your journey to the Cross this Lent?

- In the Gospel of John 3.14-21 Jesus speaks of being people who love the the light not darkness. What does it mean to you to love light rather than darkness and to “come to the light” each day?
- In John 3, Nicodemus asks Jesus honest questions, visiting at night so he can encounter Jesus and learn more about him. What are the ways you can speak to God honestly and encounter Jesus?
- John 3.16 is very well known, but how might you explain what it means to you to someone who has not heard it before?



Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; and his mercy endures for ever.

*Refrain for  
Psalm 107.1-3, 17-22*

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Eternal God,  
the light of the  
minds that know  
you,  
the joy of the  
hearts that love  
you,  
and the strength  
of the wills that  
serve you:  
grant us so to  
know you  
that we may  
truly love you,  
so to love you  
that we may  
truly serve you,  
whose service is  
perfect freedom;  
through Jesus  
Christ our Lord.  
Amen

*after Augustine  
of Hippo (430)*