



DIOCESE OF ABERDEEN & ORKNEY

FROM ASHES TO FIRE: A JOURNEY FROM LENT TO PENTECOST

Monday 7th April 2025

New Beginnings and Leaving Behind

On Mondays, we delve deeper into the readings, picking up themes and seeking to explore more what they say, the words of Jesus, the Psalmists, Epistle writers and others. This week's theme is New Beginnings and Leaving Behind

Some questions to think about as you read the Scriptures set for this week in the Revised Common Lectionary are suggested. You may wish to discuss these in a group, with a soul friend or record your thoughts in a journal.

Questions to Consider

For Isaiah 43 and Psalm 126

- What has God done for God's people? What has been left behind?
- What do these past events reveal about God?
- What are all the new things God promises to do?

Reflecting on all the passages:

- What have you given up for Christ? What do we take up for Christ?
- Are our actions of outreach and service rooted in faith?
- What smells are associated with your faith journey and Holy Week? What memories do they provoke?



Isaiah 43: 16-21

The main concern for the section of Isaiah in which this passage belongs is the exile of God's people – this is a concern of the prophet and God. The people had lost everything – land, homes, families, livelihoods and they felt in some that they had lost God. They questioned where God was in the midst of all the great disaster. The questions God's promises to them. Walter Brueggemann calls these words of prophecy "poetry of homecoming," there is rich, evoking language using the power of memory. The people are asked to look back through the immediate exilic situation to remember the mighty deeds of God in the history of God's people so to stir up belief in the people of God that what God has done for you before, God will do again therefore the people should trust in God and keep the faith

The people of God are both reminded of the Exodus (v16-17) and told to forget the Exodus (v18-19). However, there will be a new thing, a new beginning (v 20-21), a new way, a new path is being prepared for them. There are creative possibilities of what God is doing, something beyond their current imagination.

In this passage people are called to remember previous new beginnings and to trust that God will give them new beginnings beyond their current situation and imagination.



Psalms 126

This is a Psalm of two moods - happiness at the beginning and then lamenting the current crisis and remembering the current situation.

Psalms 126 begins with the people giving thanks for days past when they had been restored to the life, livelihoods and neighbours that they had lost due to exile. However, this is nostalgia for the past - which often happens when the present times are tricky or difficult or hard.

The new beginning hoped for is asked to be quick and dramatic new life - as flood waters change the desert landscape rapidly.

Psalms 126 is one of the Psalms of Ascent and may have been recited by pilgrims on their journey to the sacred place and is often paired with Psalm 127. In some contemporary Jewish traditions Psalm 126 is used as a Grace after a meal. However, Psalm 126, like Isaiah 43 deal both with past and forthcoming new beginnings.

Philippians 3:4b-14

In this passage we have part of Paul's spiritual autobiography. We hear how he made new beginnings following his conversion and what Paul left behind.

Paul speaks about righteousness and faith and what makes some take the straight path in their Christian life. Paul points out that this is not on a person's own strength, striving on your own and relying on no-one. This is about relying on God, journeying with God. Paul says that the most important thing is our relation with God - no matter what else we do, is about Grace.



John 12:1-8

This passage is one that we will hear again on the Monday of Holy Week and is full of signs and signals of what will happen to Jesus. As we begin to turn to Jerusalem and Holy Week this passage moves us there. The passage tells us that the events take place six days before Passover, situating us before the Last Supper. Jesus is having a meal with his friends - Mary, Martha and Lazarus - and this is not long after Jesus has brought Lazarus back to life from the dead. We have the contrast between the service and discipleship of Mary and that of Judas in their approach and attitude towards Jesus and how to honour him.

Mary anoints Jesus' feet - a prophetic act as this signals Jesus' imminent death as she is anointing him before for burial. She understood what was coming. Mary is an emblem of the disciple's life: washing and being washed. In Matthew and Mark the anointing takes place someone different, with an unnamed woman anointing Jesus' head - alluding to Kingship and Jesus as Messiah.