

Reflection

In 2023, I visited the Holy Land with a group from our Diocese. It was the second time I had been, but it was no less inspiring and moving. Our guide took us to many places associated with the ministry of Jesus, but one of the most remarkable places we visited was The Wilderness. An expanse of Judean desert to the east of Jerusalem and Bethlehem down to the Dead Sea, an area marked by deep valleys, rocky hills, caves and lots and lots of grainy sand. It is an area of silence, an area supposedly with nothing. And yet it was there, in The Wilderness, that I felt closest to God.

As we begin the season of Lent, we follow Jesus into The Wilderness – a place he goes to be tested, where he reflects, and where he prepares for his future mission. In our Gospel reading today, we hear of Jesus stepping away from the noise and demands of the world, to root himself firmly in the love and purpose of God in preparation for all that is to come.

Lent invites us to do the same.

We may feel called to enter our own Wilderness in the coming weeks, to strip away some of the noise and busyness to prepare ourselves for the future mission that God has called us to. Strengthened by this time with God, I pray that we may all be further built up into God's likeness as we continue our mission in St Thomas, whatever that may look like.

Rev Sarah



NEXT SUNDAY 01.03.26 2nd Sunday of Lent

10.30am in the Hall



OT Genesis 12: 1-4a
NT Romans 4: 1-5, 13-17
GOSPEL John 3: 1-17

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St Thomas, Exeter

22nd February 2026

First Sunday of Lent

10.30am in the Hall

Today

Sung Eucharist

Hymn Numbers

*310 Lord, for the years your love has kept
and guided*

56 Be thou my vision

235 I, the Lord of sea and sky

164 Go forth and tell

Tuesday 24th February

7.30pm House Group at John's house.

Wednesday 25th February

2-4pm Young at Hearts

Thursday 26th February

9.30-11am St Thomas Tots

10.30am-12noon Knit & Natter at Jenny
Tuckett's house.

Friday 27th February

9.30am Stations of the Cross

10am Staff Meeting

Saturday 28th February

12.30pm Ladies Lunch at the Royal Oak



Collect

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness, and was tempted as we are, yet without sin: give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit; and, as you know our weakness, so may we know your power to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Genesis 2: 15-17, 3: 1-7

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.' Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die."' But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

Romans 5: 12-19

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned— sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is

not reckoned when there is no law. Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgement following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Matthew 4: 1-11

Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."' Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you", and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."' Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."' Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to

him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."' Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Intercessions

I: In your loving kindness O God
R: **Have mercy and hear our prayer**

Post Communion

Lord God, you have renewed us with the living bread from heaven; by it you nourish our faith, increase our hope, and strengthen our love: teach us always to hunger for him who is the true and living bread, and enable us to live by every word that proceeds from out of your mouth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Notices

Are you or is someone you know interested in some creative training? The Diocese is offering some excellent training on pioneer mission from April 2026 to March 2027 (in person and on zoom during evenings and weekends) Please speak to Liz or email for details.

The **House Group** will be meeting weekly through Lent

There will be **Crafternoon** sessions in the Hall on the 5 Sundays in Lent 2.30pm-4pm. Do come and join in.

THIS AFTERNOON – Our first Lent Crafternoon. Come and be creative and represent St Thomas Church in the wider community! We're making Easter Gardens in the church – refreshments provided!

Wednesday 4 March 10am-1pm – a Quiet Morning for Lent in Lymptone Parish Church. Worship, meditative readings, time for prayer and creative prayer stations led by Demelza Henderson. Rev Sarah is going so do let me know if you'd like to join me.