

# Tamworth Baptist Church

## Readings and Reflections for Lent 2018

---

This Lent (Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February to Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> March) we are being encouraged to take time each week to read a passage (or some passages) from the Bible<sup>1</sup>, to reflect on it and to spend some time with God in prayer: praise, thanksgiving, confession, asking. Last year we had a different focus for each day, this year we have something for each week giving us the opportunity to reflect on it more deeply.

There will also be opportunities each Sunday in Lent – during the morning service – for people to share something of what Easter means to them.

Please do put aside some time to engage with God in this way. It would be really good if as many people as possible in the church were thinking around the same things as we prepare to celebrate Easter. And please do talk with each other about what God is saying to you, about what you are learning, about what you are struggling with, about how you are growing in relationship with Him.

The “readings and reflection” material will be available as a paper document, as a PDF document downloadable from our website, as a weekly post on our Facebook page and as a weekly email for those who request it. This is to try and make it accessible to as many people as possible.

---

<sup>1</sup> The readings for each Wednesday are taken from the Revised Common Lectionary Daily Readings

# **1. Week 1 – Wed 14<sup>th</sup> – Tue 20<sup>th</sup> Feb**

## **1.1 Readings**

Matthew 6:1-6 & Matthew 6:16-21

## **1.2 To think about**

However you are planning to experience, to engage with Lent this year, take a moment to consider your motives. As you maybe reach out to help others, when you engage in religious service, if you fast and abstain from anything during this season, are you doing it to impress others or to honour and please God? Are you looking for recognition from those around you or are you looking for a reward from your heavenly Father?

As we start this period of Lent it's a good opportunity to take stock, to think about where we are focused, to think about where we are "storing up treasure". Is it for ourselves, is it with God? Who, or what, is the "desire of your heart?"

## **2. Week 2 – Wed 21<sup>st</sup> – Tue 27<sup>th</sup> Feb**

### **2.1 Reading**

Matthew 4:1-11

### **2.2 To think about**

This period of Lent reminds us of the time that Jesus, after his baptism, was led by the Spirit into the wilderness with the intention that, while there, he would be tempted by the devil. Here, at the start of his public ministry, the great enemy of God's people was to try and divert Jesus from the path his Father had laid out before him. He fasted for forty days – and being reminded of this might encourage us to abstain from food for a while to seek to draw closer to God.

And then he was tempted – to use his powers for his own benefit, to submit himself to a ridiculous test, to worship the devil as a shortcut to achieving his purposes.

Jesus did not ignore the tempter but responded to each one with words from God's Law – Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:16; 6:13. Spend some time this week reflecting on what was going on in these passages and how they applied in Jesus' situation and think about how they apply in ours.

When we are tempted, when we doubt, are we able, as Jesus was, to draw on God's word, God's power, God's Spirit, to resist and to come through with confidence in God?

### **3. Week 3 – Wed 28<sup>th</sup> Feb – Tue 6<sup>th</sup> March**

#### **3.1 Reading**

John 12:36-43

#### **3.2 To think about**

Jesus, introduced as the “true light” at the start of this Gospel (John 1:9), now encourages his hearers to believe in that light, to believe in him.

But even after performing amazing signs of power, even after the powerful words he had spoken, many people would not believe in him, just as Isaiah had predicted hundreds of years earlier.

Is there something “blinding your eyes”, “hardening your heart” that prevents you from really seeing who Jesus is and receiving what he is saying? Are you allowing something to get in the way of experiencing the presence of Jesus and the light he wants to pour into your life?

Or are you concerned about what others might think and say if you more fully commit yourself to Jesus?

## **4. Week 4 – Wed 7<sup>th</sup> – Tue 13<sup>th</sup> March**

### **4.1 Reading**

Mark 11:15-19

### **4.2 To think about**

Do you associate with any of the groups in this story?

- Do you feel that something or someone is preventing you getting to God and really engaging with him?
- Are you – in some way – making it difficult for others to meet God, to get to know Jesus?
- Are you threatened so much by what he is saying, and the change he would make in your life, that you would rather he was gone and left you alone?

By evening Jesus and his disciples were gone leaving the people in Jerusalem on their own. What impact had Jesus made to them, what impact are you going to allow him to make to you?

If we read on in the story we would see that the following day, Jesus and his followers returned to Jerusalem. Today, you have another opportunity to engage with Jesus. How are you going to respond today?

## **5. Week 5 – Wed 14<sup>th</sup> – Tue 20<sup>th</sup> March**

### **5.1 Reading**

John 8:12-20

### **5.2 To think about**

Again, we see Jesus referring to himself as “the light” – offering to come into people’s lives, to transform them, to lead them into a much better place, to know life as it was meant to be lived.

The religious leaders thought they understood Jesus, but he rejects that claim and says they know nothing about him. Even worse he accuses them of not knowing his Father, of not knowing God. And these were the people who prided themselves on showing the right way to worship and follow God.

Do you want to know God better? If so, is there any way you are trying to get to God in your own way, using your own ideas?

Jesus makes it clear that the only way to know God is to know him. Spend some time reflecting on the person and work of Jesus, about how he lived, about what he said, about how he engaged with others, about what he did. And, as you do so, get a deeper understanding of God and draw closer to Him.

## **6. Week 6 – Wed 21<sup>st</sup> – Tue 27<sup>th</sup> March**

### **6.1 Reading**

John 12:34-50

### **6.2 To think about**

In a passage overlapping the one we looked at for week 3, Jesus speaks about the importance of living in the light. And he goes on to speak about one of the reasons he came into the world – so that no-one needed to stay in darkness but to come into the radiant circle of his light. Here Jesus makes clear the scope of what he came to do – that there is no-one outside the possibility of experiencing the light he came to bring.

Are there things in your life you are ashamed of? If so, you're not alone! But do you think that anything you have done is sufficient to exclude you from what Jesus is offering? If so, please hear the words of Jesus that he came so that "no one who believes in me should stay in darkness" (v46). Is there some deep pain or darkness in your life that you are carrying? Why not open it up to Jesus and experience the joy and the light and eternal life that he freely offers?

But also recognise the words of Jesus that those who do not accept his words but rather choose to have nothing to do with him will suffer the consequences of that and be condemned by God. Serious words, a serious challenge.

Jesus offers a choice, he doesn't force himself on us. How will you respond to him today, this week?

## **7. Week 7 – Wed 28<sup>th</sup> March – Sun 1<sup>st</sup> April**

### **7.1 Reading**

John 13:21-32

### **7.2 To think about**

As we come to the end of Lent and finally prepare to remember the events of Easter we are reminded that one of Jesus' close followers agreed to betray him. Judas went out into the night, to join the conspirators, to bring about the downfall of Jesus.

But Jesus, recognising what is going to happen – through this betrayal, his arrest, trial, humiliation, suffering, death and resurrection – is able to speak of the wonderful truth that it is through this path that God will glorify him.

As we journey together, once again, to the cross and the empty tomb, let's remember all that Jesus was prepared and able to do. But let's also rejoice that in the moment of seeming defeat, it was then that Jesus achieved his greatest and unique victory, it was there that God's glory was fully seen, it was there that the way back to God was opened for us.

The events of Easter remind us more powerfully and completely than anything else can of the love of Jesus for us, the love of God for us. Let's remember, let's grieve over what it cost Jesus, let's celebrate what he has made possible, let's experience again the new life that he has given us through his Spirit.