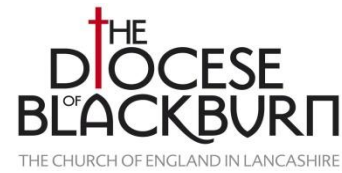


WEEKLY SERMON

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A Journey

Three years ago, I went from Egypt (Cairo to Mount Sinai to Jerusalem) to Israel through the desert of Sinai by road. During this journey I began to reflect on the similarities between the Israelites' journey through the vast and harsh desert of Sinai and the Christians' journey through the wilderness of this world.

In their journey, the Israelites' excitement melted quickly as they faced the hardships of the desert. The result was grumbling, moaning and muttering against God. It seems they lost their trust in God and forgot their daily dependence on him. God, who saved and brought them out of Egypt and through the waters of the Red Sea, is now belittled by their mistrust.

But God's response was gracious. He sent down manna from heaven; a daily provision which gave them life and sustained them through their journey. However, they had to collect their food every day because manna could not be stored for the next day. I believe the Israelites went through a 'discipleship programme' in the wilderness where God was leading them to a deeper relationship with Him and teaching them to trust in Him not only for daily provisions, but for all their needs.

As Christians we are wilderness people on a journey, going through the discipleship programme of our lives. Sometimes hardships of life may cause us to stumble and grumble. These hardships challenge and test our faith.

The Lord's Prayer reminds us to daily trust in our God. We pray, 'Give us today our daily bread' (Matt. 6:11). Do we ask for daily provisions only? No, we ask for more than just daily provisions. We ask for all our needs, for everything. We seek the bread which saves and sustains us through the hardships of our lives.

God is gracious and provides us the bread of life (John 6:35). Jesus, the personified bread, came down from heaven to save and sustain us in this life and the life to come. Those who seek this bread, feed on Jesus and trust in him are strengthened to face every hardship of the Christian journey. All we need is to deepen our relationship with God in Jesus and trust in Him for everything as we journey through the wilderness of this world.

Rev Munawar Din, Parish of St Cuthbert's Burnley, and St Luke's Brierfield.

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES