



St Mary Magdalene  
CHURCH, HUCKNALL



## Short reflections for Lent

I don't know about you but I'm easily distracted.

This Lent I want to encourage each of us to

**fix our eyes on Jesus –**

when life is rough and when it's smooth,

with our hopes and with our fears,

as individuals and as a church, and,

with our eyes fixed on Jesus

see where he will lead us.

**Fix your eyes on Jesus**

**Lent 2022**

### Ash Wednesday

*Let's throw off any extra baggage, get rid of the sin that trips us up, <sup>2</sup> and fix our eyes on Jesus, faith's pioneer and perfecter. He endured the cross, ignoring the shame, for the sake of the joy that was laid out in front of him, and sat down at the right side of God's throne. (Hebrews 12:2)*

One translation says “the author and perfecter of our faith” – he began it and made it perfect.

He is at the start and at the heart, he is the end and the one who leads us in our journey through life.

Fix your eyes on Jesus.

### Week 1 Day 2

#### Genesis 1:26

*Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have responsibility for the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’*

God says “let us make” but who is He referring to? God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit –together from before the beginning. If so we fix our eyes on God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each distinct and yet perfectly one. We are created to reflect this God in our lives. So let us follow his example by joining together as one, using our gifts for the shared purpose of serving Him, we do that best as part of a community with a common purpose.

Fix your eyes on Jesus.

### Week 1 Day 3

#### Genesis 22: 9-14

The Old Testament tells a troubling tale: God has promised Abraham that he would be the father of a huge nation, but he only has one son with his wife Sarah. But then God asks Abraham to sacrifice this son on an altar as the neighbouring religions did. It is hard to make sense of this test. Abraham does as he is told. But just as Abraham prepares to kill his son an angel says: God will provide the lamb.

Jesus is the ultimate lamb, a Father giving his son out of love, no more sacrifice is needed.

Fix your eyes on Jesus

### Week 1 Day 4

Exodus – the second book of the Bible- is the story of God’s rescue of his people from slavery in Egypt. He asks them to do some odd things –kill a perfect lamb, daub their doorposts with blood and then eat the meat.

Will they trust God on the tricky journey? Will they trust God to rescue them and follow where he leads?

The mark on the door was a sign – “we’re trusting God” – and the angel of death passed over. The lamb became known as the Passover lamb. God sent Jesus as our Passover lamb so that we may escape from being slaves to selfishness, greed and pride to live life in all its fullness.

Fix your eyes on Jesus.

Week 2 Day 1

Colossians 1<sup>15</sup>

*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

Jesus is so much more than the person we read of in the gospels –  
he is pure love in human form.

Feeling overwhelmed by life, or pulled apart?

Christ holds all things together

Fix your eyes on Jesus

Week 2 Day 2

Luke 1<sup>6</sup>

*While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.*

So this God of all creation, who holds all things together, appears  
as a baby, at a vulnerable time in history, in an occupied country  
to a young couple as their first child  
who couldn't even hold his own head up.

Feeling vulnerable and wondering if God can understand?

Fix your eyes on Jesus

### Week 2 Day 3

#### Luke 2:8-16 + Matthew 2:1-12

Ever felt left out when party invitations go out? Wondered if you're not good enough? Shepherds were rarely invited to anything – they were shepherds! Except they *were* invited by angels to the birth of Jesus.

The Star gazers set off on a journey not knowing how long or dangerous it would be. Yet they went, they took the risk. Both the shepherds and the star gazers responded to this baby with worship and amazement. What about you?

Do we know the story too well to be filled with awe and wonder?

Fix your eyes on Jesus

### Week 2 day 4

#### Matthew 2: 13-15

Who is this Jesus we worship?

After the visit of the star gazers Joseph was warned to take Jesus to Egypt, to avoid his murder.

Jesus was a refugee, a migrant, taken by his parents to save his life, like the millions who have fled from Syria, Afghanistan, Mexico, Guatemala and so many other places to save their families lives.

Jesus and his parents were lucky, they found sanctuary, and could eventually return to their home town.

He may be the Son of God, but he was also a refugee.

Fix your eyes on Jesus

## Week 2 Day 5

### Mark 1:16-20

At the time of Jesus there were lots of preachers who wandered round and invited people to be their followers to come and learn alongside.

Jesus did the same. He invited various people – including fishermen. He wasn't worried about his reputation of being judged for who his friends were. In fact it seems he purposefully sought out a wide range of folks who probably wouldn't all get on.

His invitation reflects the love of God for all people, not just religious people but everyone, and the challenge to learn to love those we find difficult.

## Fix your eyes on Jesus

### Week 2 Day 6 Luke 8:2,3

Have you ever wondered how Jesus and his friends, who had stopped fishing and tax collecting, had money for food?

Luke says *"some women had been cured of evil spirits and diseases:*

*Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; <sup>3</sup> Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women helped to support them out of their own means."*

These women were important friends of Jesus – a shocking idea for his culture. Jesus does not seem embarrassed, just grateful for their help. Is it weakness to depend on others? Jesus recognised their kindness.

Fix your eyes on Jesus.

Week 3 Day 1

Matthew 9<sup>9-13</sup>

Crowds of people came to listen to Jesus but Matthew was one of countless people with dodgy reputations that Jesus chose to spend time with.

I wonder why?

Many of the people Jesus ate with and invited to be his friends were despised by religious people.

The religious leaders questioned Jesus about his choice of friends – but Jesus took a different view.

“If you don’t want to be friends with people like Matthew – then do you want to be friends with me?”

Fix your eyes on Jesus

Week 3 Day 2

John 4:1-38

Jesus did not conform to the norms of his day or religion.

Again and again he shocked people.

In today’s episode he speaks to a Samaritan woman.

The Jews hated Samaritans and the Samaritans hated the Jews.

And talking to a woman who was not a family member!

But Jesus, in need of water himself, offered living water to refresh this woman so she could start anew.

And she in turn introduced Jesus to her community.

To Jesus the Samaritans were people, loved by God

Fix your eye on Jesus.

### Week 3 Day 3

#### Mark 5:21-43

In today and tomorrow's reading we meet an important Jewish leader, Jairus, whose daughter is very ill. On his way to the house Jesus stops and takes time to listen to a woman who has been ill for 12 years. Despite the urgency of the important man, Jesus does not hurry, but focusses on the humble woman and hears her story.

She has already been healed physically by touching Jesus robe but Jesus knows that for her healing from hurt and rejection – this listening matters too.

## Fix your eyes on Jesus

### Week 3 Day 4

#### Mark 5:35-43

After Jesus has listened to the woman the news of the girl's death is announced.

But Jesus was concerned for Jairus and his family too.

Jesus heals the girl.

I'm sure Jairus was both grateful and relieved.

I'm sure the woman who interrupted Jesus was delighted to hear about Jairus' daughter too.

In Mary's song, (Luke 1) before Jesus is born, she talks of how her child's birth will fulfil the old prophecy: how the lowly will be lifted up and the proud made to wait.

## Fix your eyes on Jesus



### Week 3 Day 5

Luke 7:1-10

To the people of Jesus day the Romans, the ones who ruled their country, were feared and hated because they treated the Jews badly, charged them taxes to fund their wars, the Romans, were very unwelcome.

But when a centurion came seeking healing for his servant Jesus was willing to go to his house. The centurion saw Jesus as a person to respect, a person with authority who could heal with just a word. Jesus recognised the faith in this man, from how he trusted Jesus words. Jesus was willing to help everyone

## Fix your eyes on Jesus

### Week 3 Day 6

Mark10:13-16

A favourite film of mine from childhood is Mary Poppins she brings lightness and joy to the family – joy to both the children and the parents – especially the Dad, too engrossed in being a grown up.

Jesus saw the religious leaders' obsession with rules and regulations and he didn't want his disciples to go the same way – instead he urged them to be like children and enjoy God's wonderful world.

This is not being childish – but child-like – take time to reflect on the difference

## Fix your eyes on Jesus

Week 4 Day 1

John 2:1-11

Jesus transforms jars of water into gallons of the finest wine. Because we only have the episode in written form, and it's been translated from its original language, we don't have the tone of voice or facial expression of Jesus.

What do you imagine?

Is Jesus looking serious when he transforms disaster to success, water into wine?

Or is he laughing and smiling having brought joy and rescued the groom from social disgrace?

Fix your eyes on Jesus

Week 4 Day 2

Luke 18:25-43

If you had the power to heal I wonder how you might make the most of it? Would you advertise? Turn up at the hospital?

What Jesus did was allow people to choose for themselves what he would do for them.

He respected their dignity, didn't impose, but listened as they shared their needs. He transformed the man's life.

I wonder what you would like Jesus to do for you?

Fix your eyes on Jesus

Week 4 Day 3

Mark 7:31-37

I can't begin to imagine what it must be like to be deaf and unable to speak. To have to wait for people to look at you before you can begin to even slightly understand from their faces what is going on.

How lonely!

Jesus comes to transform our ability to belong, to communicate, to understand other people and be understood.

The deaf man was brought to Jesus by other people. Who brought you to Jesus so that he could transform your life?

Fix your eyes on Jesus

Week 4 Day 4

John 8:1-11

Some people end up in a bad place because of choices they made, others because of what has been done to them.

We don't know the back story of this woman brought to Jesus.

The Pharisees didn't really care –

she was just a pawn in their game of trying to catch Jesus out.

But Jesus transformed the situation – turned it on its head.

The religious people walked away feeling awkward

and the woman received a new dignity.

Instead of death Jesus gave her a new life.

How has Jesus transformed your life and how you see yourself?

Fix your eyes on Jesus

Week 4 Day 5

Luke 13:10-17

Can you imagine not being able to stand up straight for 18 years?  
Eighteen years of only looking at the ground, not seeing the sky,  
unable to look at people's faces – missing their smiles!  
Eighteen years of people not looking her in the face,  
but looking over her head.

And Jesus transforms this woman's life.

Not just physically but he restores her dignity, her ability to look  
people in the eye, recognise their faces not their feet!

Jesus is reprimanded for doing it on the Sabbath –  
but this woman's wellbeing matters more than the rules.

Fix your eyes on Jesus

Week 4 Day 6

Matthew 7:29

The Pharisees and scribes had studied for years.  
They kept the laws and checked others did the same.

As the religious leaders they  
and often looked down on other people.

In contrast, Jesus cared for the ordinary people,  
transforming their understanding of what God required.  
Without all the trappings of power his life had integrity.

He had an authority the people had never seen,  
not even from the Roman rulers or soldiers for all their power.

Fix your eyes on Jesus

Week 5 Day 1

Mark 6:45,46.

What must have been like at the feeding of 5,000?

What did Jesus do next? Go and celebrate?

Talk it through with his disciples?

No. He sent them off in the boat.

Alone, he talked to God.

I wonder what they talked about...

These conversations with God happened often.

We rarely hear what is said,

but they seem to equip Jesus for the next day,

strengthening him for what is to come,

Fix your eyes on Jesus

Week 5 Day 2

John 21:1-14

We jump to the end of the gospel of John,

the risen Jesus one on one with Peter,

who had betrayed Jesus just before Jesus was killed.

Just as Jesus had predicted.

When they meet again there are no recriminations.

No "I told you so", no resentment from Jesus, just forgiveness.

Jesus is the same now. Always forgiving.

Fix your eyes on Jesus

### Week 5 Day 3

#### Matthew 5

One of the things many people outside the Christian faith recognise in Jesus for is that he was a good teacher.

He did not speak down to people,  
but nor did he speak above their heads.

He spoke about the things that matter.

And he spoke about everyday things  
to point them to God and his kingdom.

He spoke about running out of bread, lost sheep, brothers falling out. He rarely explained his stories.

Instead he left people to think for themselves  
and make their own minds up.

### Fix your eyes on Jesus

### Week 5 Day 4

#### Matthew 5:38-48

“You have heard it said... but I say to you...”

The people must have been shocked to hear Jesus take things they'd been told for years and shake them up completely. Jesus' version always pointed to the God who loves and invites us to do the same. If you come across a rule that seems to incite hatred or fear of another – look for how Jesus turns it upside down to love

### Fix your eyes on Jesus

Week 5 Day 5

Matthew 16:18

Most pictures we see of Jesus have him looking very serious – to the extent that some people are uncomfortable if people smile or laugh in church.

Jesus gives Simon a nick name “The Rock”, not because he is strong but because he speaks first and thinks later and changes his mind. Jesus dubs his friends James and John “Sons of Thunder” – do they fall out a lot?

Thomas is referred to as “The twin” – we don’t know why.

I’m sure they were said with a smile on his face.

What do you think?

Fix your eyes on Jesus

Week 5 Day 6

Luke 19:1-10

It’s understandable that no one wanted to let Zacchaeus get to the front of the crowd when Jesus was travelling through Jericho.

Despite his probably wealth Zacc was unpopular and therefore lonely.

Meeting Jesus brought joy both to Zacc and to those he had cheated and stolen from their money was not just returned but with interest! And it must have brought joy to the poor who benefitted from Zacchaeus change of heart.

Jesus still brings joy when lives are changed by him.

Fix your eyes on Jesus

Week 6 Day 1  
Matthew 21:12-13

The religious system had developed to favour the rich  
and keep out the poor.

The people in power, the rich, may not have noticed,  
or perhaps didn't care, what was going on..

But Jesus did.

His dramatic action and strong words made it clear: change!  
Throughout the Bible the powerless have always been close to  
God's heart – even if not close to the hearts of religious leaders.

Yet still, despite the words and actions of Jesus,  
I fear we have not changed.

Fix your eyes on Jesus

Week 6 Day 2  
Matthew 26:47-50

Why on earth did Judas betray Jesus?

Was he disappointed that Jesus wasn't the revolutionary he had  
hoped?

Was he trying to force Jesus to act and rebel against the Romans?

We don't know. What we do know is that Jesus was betrayed.

He let himself be betrayed

because there was something more important than his own safety.

And like everything else that Jesus did,  
it was something to do with love.

God's love for all people.

Fix your eyes on Jesus



Week 6 Day 3  
Matthew 26:59-63

Jesus, the crowd drawing preacher,  
the person who transformed so many lives,  
who brought hope to those who felt forgotten,  
was falsely charged.

He had to be falsely charged for he had done no wrong, only  
good; showed love and stood up to hatred.

He could have acted, he could have defended himself.

But on this occasion he chose silence.

Fix your eyes on Jesus

Week 6 Day 4  
Matthew 27:27-30

I can't watch violence in a film or on TV  
and don't know what I'd do if it happened in real life.

But to turn away from this awful violence of the crucifixion

is to hide from the reality of the world,  
the violence that is all that some people know.

Jesus does not retaliate, he accepts it.

For he has a bigger purpose:

showing us how much we are loved

Even in pain he holds no grudge or resentment.

Fix your eyes on Jesus

Week 6 Day 5

John 19:25-30

In his gospel John describes Mary, Jesus' mum by him as he dies. To lose a child is said to be the worst grief. Even in his agony Jesus is concerned for his mum. In this moment the prophecy in Luke 2 that "a sword that will pierce Mary's heart" is fulfilled.

We will never fully understand the death of Jesus. God-made-human dying makes no sense to our limited human understanding.

God only knows. And because of this...

Fix your eyes on Jesus

Week 6 Day 6

Matthew 27:50-54

Only Matthew records this incident – it is rarely referred to or talked about.

It reminds me of a beautiful story of a child asking what happened to Jesus on Holy Saturday.

The friend replied –  
he went into Hell to bring out his friend Judas.

As we wait for the resurrection of Jesus tomorrow....

Fix your eyes on Jesus