



Bible readings for this week:

Monday	Reading: Matthew 26:57–27:10 Pray for Mark, Rebecca, Charlie and Laney Rotheram
Tuesday	Reading: Matthew 27:11–31 Pray for Nick, Ada and Joshua Savu and family
Wednesday	Reading: Matthew 27:32–56 Pray for Dean, Simona and Mia Stanfield
Thursday	Reading: Matthew 27:57–28:20 Pray for Karl and Ingrid Stanfield and family
Friday	Reading: Mark 1:1–20 Pray for Terry and Sheila Strong and family
Saturday	Reading: Catch up Pray for Gert Schwartz and family
Sunday	Reading: Mark 1:21–45 Pray for Marion Tewkesbury and family

Other Prayers:

- ▶ Pray for Pastor Mick's dad who has terminal cancer.
- ▶ Pray for the church board as they meet this Friday.
- ▶ Pray for Church of the Nazarene's Board of Ministry interviews which are happening in the upcoming weeks. Katie Cameron is being interviewed for her first District Minister's Licence.
- ▶ Pray for NTC Classes as the Spring Semester starts this week.
- ▶ Pray for Keith Hambleton, and Brenda Hambleton. Keith is very unwell, has been taken into hospital.
- ▶ Give thanks for positive news from Isobel about her cancer, and pray for continued healing.

A note from Karl

We would like to express our deepest thanks for all the planning and preparations for Sunday 7th February 2021. It was an experience we will always treasure. Thank you for the gifts, cards, and messages we received! We are remembering you all in our prayers.
Karl and Ingrid

It gives me such great joy to be writing **this first Update to you as Pastor of Brooklands Church of the Nazarene**. These are exciting days for me, my family and, I hope, you too. Thank you to everyone who has sent cards, text messages, emails, prayers and well wishes, they have been a tremendous source of encouragement. However, if I'm being honest - something I endeavour to be as a Pastor - there is a slight sense of frustration with the way things are at the minute. You see, for me, **ministry is all about people**: meeting people, drinking tea/coffee with people, laughing with people, listening to people, praying with people. And in a season where person-to-person interaction is limited I could become discouraged at the way ministry, therefore, feels somewhat limited. But then I am reminded of this truth:

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ...? 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35, 38-39).

Here, Paul reminds us that God's love is not limited; and **God's love is not limited because God is not limited**. And so, despite all the challenges and restrictions we face at the moment, please take heart in this truth: God is near and his love is available to all.

We as a church will continue to demonstrate God's love in all the ways we can. We'll continue to worship online, we'll continue to care for one another and stay connected through various means, and we'll continue to meet needs in our local community as we become aware of them. **But perhaps the most important way we can demonstrate God's love in these days is to continue to keep each other safe.** I did hear a very wise individual on the media recently say this: "preservation of life is the highest act of worship." I'm inclined to agree.

So as much as I long for hugs and handshakes - you'll learn this quickly of me - these will have to wait for now. I am of course available on email and telephone, the details of which can be found on this Update, so please do not hesitate to contact me for prayer, church-related items or if you just wanted to say 'hello!' (I really mean that!)

I'm delighted with the way Pastor Karl and his family were honoured last Sunday for 30+ years of service here in Brooklands. Karl has been and continues to be a great source of encouragement to me.

The church board meets this Friday so please be in prayer for this first meeting with me as Pastor.

May the Peace of Christ be with you!

Michael



Message: Jesus in the Wilderness!

Readings: Matthew 4 verses 1 to 11

I wonder if you have ever gone for a bus and the moment you make it to the bus stop, your bus comes around the corner. That's a nice feeling, isn't it?

Or maybe you've experienced the opposite – you're a bit from the bus stop and your bus flies past you! And you begin to run hoping that it'll stop and wait for you but just as you make it to the stop the doors close and it drives away. If you're anything like me you keep running and pretend that you weren't running for the bus and just out on a daily jog! That's not as nice.

Or if you turn up for an appointment and you get called straight away with no waiting – that's nice too isn't it?

Or if you turn up at a friend's house that when they open the door they say, 'I've just put the kettle on!' That was well timed wasn't it?

And I wonder if any of you have testimony about God's timing? I'm sure many of you do and I'd love to hear about it one time. But you know those seasons when your praying for something and you're wondering why God isn't answering in the way or as quick as you want and you might find yourself getting frustrated only to realise that when he does breakthrough in prayer his timing and ways were the best possible outcome for the situation? Those times are a real blessing!

Next week is the beginning of Lent, traditionally the season where we as Christians begin to prepare ourselves for Easter and the journey there through Holy Week and Good Friday – and the beginning of Lent, Scripturally, is usually the passage that we are looking at today, Jesus being tempted, or tested, in the Wilderness. Now if we are being really true to Church calendar we wouldn't come to this passage until next week but humour me a moment, please.

Because the reason that I find all this interesting, and the reason that I'm speaking of God's timing, is because this passage marks the beginning of Jesus ministry. And that just so happens to coincide with what we have here today where we as a church begin a new season of ministry together. So it got me thinking: 'what lessons, if any, might we glean from the way Jesus begins his ministry for us here in Brooklands Church of the Nazarene?' Let's see...

Isn't it fascinating that Jesus, baptised in the Jordan, anointed by the Holy Spirit, affirmed as God's Son by a voice from Heaven, all of which take place in the passage just before ours and all of which mark the beginning of his ministry, begins the way he does?

It sometimes helps me to put myself into the passage, so here is how I'm inclined to start new things: I want to throw myself right in, I want to be among the people, I want to work hard so that those I'm working with get an idea of how much I am committed, I have a million new ideas and think about all the different ways they can be implemented...

But that's not what Jesus does, is it? Jesus, in many ways does the opposite. He takes himself away from the people. And he fasts. And he prays. And he wrestles with temptation to ensure that there would be not a single chance that his ministry is shaped by anything other than the will of God his Father. Jesus knows that for God to come first in his life and ministry then he

must put God first in his life and his ministry. For Jesus, it starts with listening through prayer, fasting and applying the Scriptures to our lives. One commentator put it simply, "Jesus ensures that the first things come first."

Now there's a beautiful truth that we mustn't miss here, because if we are reading this story with a 'whole Bible' hat on then the symbolisms will jump off the page to us. Jesus spends 40 days and nights in a place not too dissimilar to the place where His ancestors famously spent 40 years wandering in a story that can be found in the Scriptures that he knew so well (Exodus-Joshua). And that is a story that is significant to the people of God and the ones Jesus came to save. It's a story that speaks of rescue and emancipation and miracles and promises of new land and milk and honey. But it's also a story of heartache and struggle and failure and wandering and for Jesus to step into that place right at the beginning of his ministry comforts us with the truth that he also steps into our wildernesses too. Jesus, here, re-establishes himself as a saviour who takes on, in a very real sense, all of our mistakes and failures and heartaches and our disappointments in a way that means when we cry out to him in prayer he responds with one of the most powerful truths of the Gospel – I understand.

And as powerful a truth as that is it remains only half of the whole truth. Because not only did Jesus step into that wilderness experience, he overcame it. You see where the Israelites fell short in there 40 years of wandering, Jesus was victorious. The Israelites hungered – Jesus was sustained by the Word of God; The Israelites cried out for God to 'show up' – Jesus wouldn't have God tested; The Israelites bowed down to a golden calf – Jesus worships God alone. Jesus overcame the temptations of wealth, pride and power where the Israelites fell short. And he overcomes on our behalf in the places we fall short; He offers us victory over sin too.

BUT, if we want to know that victory then we must travel that same road, that's what Lent reminds us of! Easter is a great day where we celebrate our ultimate victory as Christians, but Lent reminds us that in order to get there we must walk through a cross-shaped door; resurrection is our promise in Christ, but to experience resurrection one first must die, right? That's why Jesus says things like this: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it." (Matthew 16:24-25)

Lent invites us back to that journey, and it's the journey that leads to victory, to resurrection - don't miss that! It gives us an opportunity to pause, listen, take stock where we are as Jesus followers, and be reminded that if we want to save our life we must first lose it.

And so here is what I am proposing for us as a church. We're going to journey through the Scriptures to the cross. That's what our focus will be on over the next few weeks, and I'll say more about that next week. But I also wonder if we might enter in to a season of listening both individually and collectively? What might God be saying to us in this season? And I am going to suggest some ways that can assist our listening and I'll introduce the first of these next week.

Let's use Lent as an opportunity to use Jesus start to ministry as a model for this new day in the life of our church – let's walk the path to the cross and take stock along the way.

Before we do anything else, let us listen.