

Prayer ~ Sunday 14th March 2021

No 1008

Lectionary readings: Numbers 21: 4-9; Psalm 107: 1-3, 17-22; Ephesians 2: 1-10; John 3: 14-21 (Fourth Sunday in Lent)

For reflection and prayer

- **Numbers 21:** God had delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and they had had ample evidence of God's presence with them since then. But then they hit a bad patch, with the result that they forgot how awful their experience in Egypt had been and they longed for the 'good old days'. How like us, never satisfied with life as it is, looking back to the past with nostalgia, or to the future which we feel can't possibly be as bad as what we are experiencing here and now. And so we miss God present with us where we are, and are in danger of missing the lessons we need to learn from our present experience. So Moses prayed and God made His presence known. Let's find God present with us where we are this week.
- **Psalm 107:** The people cried out to God in their need and He answered them. But, you may say, that is not my experience: God doesn't answer my prayers. But it depends what we are praying for. God doesn't promise us an easy time; what He does promise is the strength and comfort of His presence as we go through whatever we are going through. Every path we travel is sacred, so let's not pray that God will keep us free from trials, but that we will experience His loving presence in the midst of them.
- **Ephesians 2:** Several verses stand out for me in this passage. v2 (The Message): *'You let the world ... tell*

you how to live. You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience.' Sounds like our own generation, taking our standards from the media, allowing ourselves to be influenced by the unbelief and ungodliness around us. And how does God respond? v4 (The Message): *'...immense in mercy and with an incredible love, he (God) embraced us.'* v7 (The Message): *'...to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus.'* This is the God we worship, a God of great mercy and loving-kindness. v10 (NLT): *'We are God's masterpiece.'* God wants us to be all He created us to be - people who show forth the glory of God, who created and redeemed us, and live like Him in this world to transform the world.

- **John 3:** By believing in Jesus, we can have a whole and lasting life. The Message says we are *'addicted to denial and illusion'*. This is how we humans so often are - refusing to face up to reality, preferring to deceive ourselves and cling to the illusion we have of ourselves. This week let's face up to the truth of who and what we are and let God bring us healing and wholeness through trusting in Jesus and seeking to become like Him. Here is a quote from Jane Williams (wife of the former Archbishop of Canterbury) relating to this passage: *'God has brought us into freedom and life The rest of our lives are about learning to live in our lively freedom.'*

A prayer

Lord, we look at our imperfections and ask how we can be Your masterpiece. But that is how You see us. Help us, Lord, to see ourselves from Your perspective and to allow You to embrace us and to love us into wholeness and into that freedom that You have won for us at great cost. Amen