



A River Through The Desert

Introduction

I am delighted to be able to share with you this new resource for Lent which we hope will be a taste of the beauty, wonder and inspiration of the Holy Land. For those who have been, it should be a wonderful reminder of those times which undoubtedly will have left an indelible mark. For those who have not yet been able to make their pilgrimage, here perhaps it might serve as a taster to inspire you to find a way to come to the Land of the Holy One.

Owing to the pandemic, St George's College has been closed since early March 2020. This Lent Study, with the short films which are an important part of each week's material, enable us to bring something of the wonders of these lands which are the cradle of the Abrahamic faiths to you, wherever you are.

The Holy Land has been called (probably first by Eusebius of Cesarea) the fifth Gospel. The reason for this name is that, just as the written gospels testify to the word and works of Jesus Christ, so the land itself conveys that same message. We talk about 'salvation history' as the Christian story from Abraham and Sarah to Jesus as the way that hope unfolded for us. We can also talk about the Holy Land as communicating the 'geography of salvation' because the land itself has the potential to convey the gospel of Jesus Christ in a very powerful way. This at least is the testimony of many millions of pilgrims who come to these lands every year.

I have written this study course drawing on the ways in which the Land here has touched and deepened my faith over the past two years of living in Jerusalem and serving as the Dean of the College. I have also drawn on the ways in which places back home, in Great Britain, have enriched my faith. My hope is that you will be drawn to think about the ways in which your own context and its geography can draw you into a deeper relationship with God this Lent.

This Lent series is called *A River Through The Desert* because a Lent course should aim to water faith in the way that a river will cause the desert to flower and flourish in unexpected ways. I hope and pray that it will do so for you. In these very trying and testing days we stand in need, perhaps more than ever, of finding solace and encouragement in our faith that will give us the strength to endure these challenges. We know that God's grace is sufficient to help us whatever difficulties we face; may this course be a vehicle for God's grace.

All the staff of the College yearn for the day when we will be able to welcome pilgrims back again to this wonderful centre in Jerusalem. We give thanks for all the prayers that have been said for us through this pandemic. The end is beginning to come into view, thank God.

Blessings of the Holy One from the Holy City,

Richard Sewell
Dean of St George's College, Jerusalem