

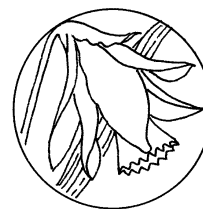
in terms of personal formation. What happens next is that Jesus finds Himself in the wilderness engaged in a bitter struggle with the Devil and undergoing personal doubts and attacks in every way, all of which seek to undermine His new-found confidence in the Father and in His own status and calling before God. What sometimes comes as a surprise to us about this is that the Gospel writers tell us that Jesus finds Himself in the wilderness because it was the Spirit who led Him there (actually the force of the original Greek is that the Spirit 'threw Him out' into the wilderness). The first thing the Spirit leads Jesus into, after assuring Him of his divine Sonship, is the hostile wilderness and into a place where God seems far away. What's that all about?

It seems that for Jesus, and for us too, personal formation comes about through the interplay of two factors; the anointing and infilling of God, and refining through the hard circumstances of life. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes of Jesus being made perfect (i.e. 'mature' or suitably equipped') through His sufferings. For Jesus the wilderness was just as critical as was the overwhelming with the Spirit.

All of us will go through wilderness times in our walk with God, times when God seems far away or absent, times of difficulty, hardship, even pain. The crucial thing for us is how we respond to such times. Our inclination often is to give in to such times, to put our walk with God on hold until He restores to us a sense of His closeness. We cannot believe that God could possibly be in these times and we reckon that it's up to Him to show up again; we'll wait until He does. That, I suggest, is the exact opposite of the way Jesus responds to the wilderness. With Him there is a sense of wrestling, of clinging on to God's word, revisiting God's great promises even if they seem rather flat and empty. Far from being simply nostalgic for easier and more intimate times, Jesus allows the memory of them to stir Him to seek God again. The truth of God's word becomes etched more deeply in His being as He counters Satan's lies with biblical truth. We too should allow our wilderness times to refine us, to spur us on to seeking God, to hungering and thirsting for more of Him.

Jesus leaves the wilderness in the full power of the Spirit and begins His remarkable ministry, provoking awe and wonder amongst those who witness it. The Baptism and the Wilderness together have formed Him and made Him adequate, fit for purpose. May God do the same in us, pouring His Spirit into us in fuller and fuller measure, and shaping us through every circumstance of life.

In Christ - *Ian*



**The Parish of
MARPLE
All Saints' Church
St Paul's Church, Strines**

VICAR'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

I am fascinated by the process of events surrounding the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Emerging from the carpenter's shop in Nazareth, Jesus makes the journey south to the Jordan river where He is baptised by John. Coming out of the water He experiences an encounter with God which will shape Him for the rest of His life and ministry. Not only does God affirm Jesus as His own son and declare His pleasure in His son, but the words God uses (familiar Biblical references to the coming Messiah) make it clear beyond any doubt that Jesus really is God's chosen servant sent to bring in the Kingdom of God on earth. Not only is Jesus enfolded in the Father's love, but He is called and commissioned for ministry in an unmistakeable way. Not only is He given a vision of the coming Kingdom, but in being overwhelmed by the Spirit of God, he tastes the very essence of that coming Kingdom and is empowered for all that lies ahead.

Most of us would settle for that. What we long for more than anything is to grow in our sense of identity before God as His chosen, beloved children, and to grow in confidence in His call upon us. We long for more of His Spirit to fill us and to empower us, and we know from past experience that the closer we feel to God and the deeper our experience of His Spirit, the more confident we feel in serving Him and witnessing to Him.

It is absolutely right that we feel this way and that we pursue continually a deeper closeness and a greater infilling with His Spirit. However, it seems that this is only one side of the coin

**PLEASE
TAKE
THIS
HOME**

**FOCUS
ON**

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2010

All Saints' Church

Wednesday	3	8.00pm	WELCOME EVENING at the Vicarage
Thursday	4	2.30pm	EVERGREEN CELL in the Lounge
SUNDAY	7	8.00am	HOLY COMMUNION (1662)
		9.15am	HOLY COMMUNION Preacher: <i>Ian Parkinson</i>
		11.15am	MORNING WORSHIP Preacher <i>Ian Parkinson</i>
		6.30pm	CELEBRATION Preacher: <i>Bruce Perrin</i>
Tuesday	9	8.00pm	RELATIONSHIP MATTERS in Church "The Ex-Factor"
Thursday	11	2.30pm	EVERGREEN SERVICE in Church
SUNDAY	14	8.00am	HOLY COMMUNION (1662)
MOTHERING SUNDAY		9.15am	WORSHIP TOGETHER Preacher: <i>Nadine Parkinson</i>
		11.15am	WORSHIP TOGETHER Preacher <i>Nadine Parkinson</i>
		6.30pm	HOLY COMMUNION Preacher: <i>Liz Shercliff</i>
Tuesday	16	2.00pm	MOTHERS' UNION MONTHLY MEETING in the Lounge
Thursday	18	12.45pm	12.45 LUNCH in the Bowyer Hall
Friday	19	2.00pm	SOUTH AMERICAN MISSION SOCIETY (SAMS) PRAYER MEETING at Flat 4 Willow Court
Saturday	20	9.30am-1pm	SCHOOL of THEOLOGY in Church "Paul: God's New Thing"
SUNDAY	21	8.00am	HOLY COMMUNION (1662)
		9.15am	MORNING WORSHIP Preacher: <i>Martin Palmer</i>
		11.15am	HOLY COMMUNION Preacher: <i>Martin Palmer</i>
		6.30pm	CELEBRATION Preacher: <i>Geoff Green</i>
Monday	22	7.30pm	CHURCH'S MINISTRY AMONG JEWISH PEOPLE (CMJ) Prayer Meeting at Flat 11, The Beeches, 57 Stockport Road, Romiley
Wednesday	24	9.30am	HOLY COMMUNION in the Prayer Room followed by Home Communion
Thursday	25	2.30pm	EVERGREEN SERVICE in Church
Friday	26	1.30pm	ALL SAINTS' SCHOOL EASTER SERVICE in Church
SUNDAY	28	8.00am	HOLY COMMUNION (1662)
		9.15am	MORNING WORSHIP Preacher: <i>David Hughes</i>
		11.15am	MORNING WORSHIP Preacher <i>David Hughes</i>
		6.30pm	CELEBRATION Preacher: <i>Ian Parkinson</i>

St Paul's Church

Tuesday	2	7.45pm	STRINES' FRIENDSHIP GROUP AGM
Thursday	4	7.45pm	"When I Survey" Course
SUNDAY	7	10.30am	MORNING WORSHIP & SUNDAY SCHOOL Preacher: <i>Christine Blodwell</i> followed by Annual General Meeting at 12.15pm plus Bring & Share Lunch
Wednesday	10	2.00pm	"When I Survey" Course
Friday	12	4.30-5pm	MOTHERS' UNOIN WAVE OF PRAYER at 8 The Turnpike
Saturday	13	10am-3pm	QUIET DAY
SUNDAY	14	10.30am	MOTHERING SUNDAY HOLY COMMUNION Preacher: <i>Christine Blodwell</i>
Tuesday	16	2.00pm	MOTHERS' UNION MONTHLY MEETING at All Saints'
		7.30pm	BIBLE FELLOWSHIP
Thursday	18	12.45pm	12.45 LUNCH at All Saints'
		7.45pm	"When I Survey" Course
SUNDAY	21	10.30am	MORNING WORSHIP Preacher: <i>Christine Blodwell</i>
		4.30pm	WWW.AD FAMILY SERVICE - an informal family service followed by afternoon tea
Wednesday	24	2.00pm	"When I Survey" Course
Thursday	25	7.45pm	"When I Survey" Course
Saturday	27	2-4pm	CHILDREN'S FUN TIME - "SPRING IN(2) ACTION"
SUNDAY	28	10.30am	MORNING WORSHIP Preacher: <i>Ian Parkinson</i>
Wednesday	31	2.00pm	"When I Survey" Course

WEEKLY EVENT:

Thursdays 10.30am-12Noon POP IN for coffee and chat

ADVANCE NOTICE - April:

Thursday 1 7pm PASSOVER MEAL

<h1>CORE VALUES</h1>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ALL INVOLVED - - BEING DISCIPLES - - CREATING COMMUNITY - - DOING EVANGELISM - - ENCOUNTERING GOD -
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