

in translation we have the word departure, but that's not the word that Luke uses, because he literally says "Exodus"

And that's really important, because Exodus is a completely Old Testament word; it's the name of the second book of the Torah named so because it tells the story of the ancient Israelites' escape from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the promised land, a journey that takes includes the crossing of the Red Sea and for the ty years' of wandering in the wilderness.

The Exodus is the defining experience of the ancient Israelites, it's what makes them who they are (and in fact that remains true of Jews to today).

For the Israelites the Exodus was what made them a nation, it transformed them from slaves into free people, it takes them from being in a nowhere place to their place and so for Jesus what will happen at Jerusalem takes on the same connotation; the events of his Exodus will be what will define him, and reveal him as he truly is.

Sadly, we lose that sense by using the word departure instead of Exodus, because Jesus death isn't just a going away, its anything but, it's a departure which allows coming to life.

So, if we're looking forward to Jesus's death and resurrection as his exodus, which both defines us and changes the world, we can perhaps see the Transfiguration in a different light.

Because it's all about change.

For the Jews when they left Egypt their journey was one into the unknown....

Jesus constantly calls his followers to transformation of life, were not meant to be stagnant, resting on the laurels of past experience, or last year's lent triumph...the feeling of well I'm better than I used to be ...or worst still I'm better than they are...

Each of us are called to proclaim God's kingdom, a kingdom of life that encompasses every aspect of human existence. The kingdom of God is an exodus for us all, it's a departure into what it often a painful wilderness journey not a 40-day Lenten fast so that we can return back to Egypt but a permanent departure from everything that prevents us from a full communion with the Lord.

Peter's shelters, the booths, he suggests building might look like an attempt to escape what is ahead but they actually show that he sees that the journey has to be made, with only temporary resting places on the way.

I saw a quote which I think I'd like printed made into a t shirt, it read "If Jesus can rise from the death then you can surly get out of bed - Get to church!!!

We feel good enough to work 8 hours fa day salary and yet don't feel good enough to come to church for a hour.

We feel strong enough to work 40 hours during the week but too tired to come to Church on Sunday for two.

We feel good enough to go shopping but can't be bothered to offer our time to clean the church.

Were happy to buy ourselves a new skirt or two-week holiday, but when the offering bag comes our way, are reluctant even adamant not to give to the Lord who gave us what we have in the first place.

It isn't a requirement that to be a Christian, we need to clean the church, go to the bible study, or put something in the collection...

What I'm talking about is us having a Spiritually attuned life.... of being dissatisfied with just seeing Jesus transfigured, saying 'that's nice' and walking back down the mountain...

But rather, I want to be transfigured to.

The Season of lent isn't an Easter version of the advent calendar, that simply counts down the days to an Easter egg....

Its designed to give us opportunity to be honest with God and become more connected to his plans for our life, not just our life here in these 70 years but for one that will be for eternity...

Our Christian faith is supposed to be about imitating Jesus who said some pretty radical things

But so often we only want to imitate Jesus in ways that appeal to us, like moving up and down Waitrose aisles we pick and choose the parts of his life we will emulate based on our own sense of what's important...but that's not living in the reality of what it truly means to be a follower of Jesus.

This may well not be the sermon you ask for a copy of after the service because it's an in your face, sermon, one which challenge where we'd rather not be challenged.

40 days in the desert, he prayed and fasted. He stood strong in the face of temptation. He prepared for a sacrifice, with us on his mind. The 40 days of lent we pray and we fast, we deny ourselves and repent. We prepare our hearts with him on our mind, we remember what he gave, what he suffered when he died so we could live.

We celebrate the victory won when he rose from the grave. During lent remember the words of Jesus "it is written, we shall not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Let us give be, let us be more, let us do more,

It's too easy to convince ourselves that we're too busy or too tired or too whatever. We all do it, whether overtly or subtly.

Regardless, Lent shows us those areas of life that need a little more God activity.

So maybe instead of picking up a snack we pick up a lent book or our bible.

Maybe rather than buying ourselves a new blouse, a bunch of flowers or a round of golf, we give that money to the church, or someone who needs it.

Maybe rather than spending an extra half hour in bed, we get up and read the and pray before we go to work.

If doesn't cost us, then were not giving anything...

Lent gives us all a structured reason to make necessary changes in our lives that we already know we need and I'm not being prescriptive about what we do or give so that in 40 days' time we say well I did what the vicar asked....it's not about that, it's about us really and truly engaging with the one who gave us everything....Change is what repentance is all about — so that rend our hearts, not our garments.

Let's pray....

Almighty God, we ask you this day to renew our spirit. And through your strength to keep us disciplined in mind and body. Help us to recognise our sin and keep focused on you so that we may grow in holiness. Help us to know your will and give us the endurance to carry it out. In our prayers may we know you are present. In our confessions may we find healing and forgiveness. In our fasting may we be nourished by your word. In our service to others may we be beacons of your love. As the days of Christ's death and resurrection approach. May we meditate on the gift of the cross so that we may celebrate in his triumph over sin and death. In the name of Jesus your son and our Lord.

Amen

St Mary's Sanderstead & St James Riddlesdown 23.2.20
Sunday before Lent Exodus 24:12-end Matthew 17:1-9
Preparing for the journey Fr Grant Cohen

An overweight man decided that it was time to shed a few pounds. It was near lent and he changed his normal routine of driving so that he could avoid the MacDonald's on his way to work. One morning though, he arrived at work with a delicious double cheeseburger, large fries, 20 McNuggets and a large coke.

His friends scolded him, 'I thought you had given all that up...'

This McDonald is special he told them, out of habit I went by my normal Lord if you want me to have a one, then let me find a parking space...

Sure enough on the ninth trip round I got one...

Growing up in the evangelical tradition, I experienced Lent as a bit of a joke. "What are you giving up for Lent?" my friends would ask. "Homework," "Obeying my parents." And any other number of things that in reality I didn't want to do...or were convenient not to do. I wonder when we give things up for lent what we are thinking and saying?

For me then, and for many now, Lent is just one of those odd practices that Roman Catholics do...

In the ancient church, Lent was a time for new believers to be prepared for baptism and for seasoned Christians that had found themselves in sinful habits to focus on repentance.

In time, all Christians came to see Lent as a season to be reminded of their need for penitence and to prepare spiritually for the celebration of Easter.

And part of this preparation involved the Lenten "fast"

...Giving up something special to them during the following 5 weeks.

Historically, many Protestants rejected the practice of Lent, pointing out, that it wasn't anywhere in the bible.

They wanted to avoid some of what they viewed as excessive aspects of Catholic penitence that tended to obscure the gospel of grace and so at best, it was seen as something completely optional, and, at worst, a superfluous Catholic practice that real Christians should avoid altogether.

Both, Matthew, Mark and Luke tell the story of the Transfiguration, but it's only Luke, who tells us what Jesus talks about to Moses and Elijah, and so I want to read what he says....

About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. ²⁹ As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. ³⁰ Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus. ³¹ They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem.