

Sandy St Swithuns January 24th 2021

Streams in the Desert

John the Baptist

Luke ch.3 It was now the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, the Roman emperor (AD 29).

Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea;

Herod Antipas was ruler over Galilee;

his brother Philip was ruler over Iturea and Traconitis;

Lysanias was ruler over Abilene.

² Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests.

At this time a message from God came to John the son of Zechariah, who was living in the wilderness.

³ Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River, preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven.

⁷ When the crowds came to John for baptism, he said, "You brood of snakes! Who warned you to flee the coming wrath? ⁸ Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.

... Even now the axe of God's judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire."

¹⁰ The crowds asked, "What should we do?"

¹¹ John replied, "If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry."

You tax collectors and soldiers – only do what the law says is right.

¹⁵ Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to know whether John might be the Messiah.

¹⁶ John answered their questions by saying, "I baptize you with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am —so much greater that I'm not even worthy to be his servant and untie the straps of his sandals.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

²¹ One day when the crowds were being baptized, Jesus himself came to John and was baptized.

As he was praying, the heavens opened,

²² and the Holy Spirit, in bodily form, descended on him like a dove.

And a voice from heaven said, "You are my dearly loved Son, and in you I am well pleased."

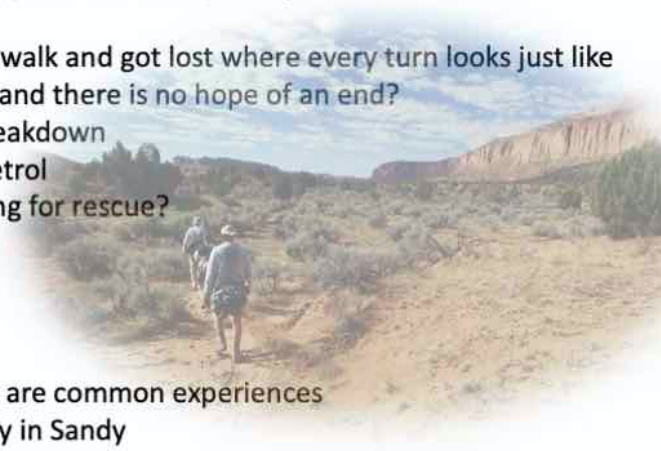
²³ Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his public ministry.

Mark 1:12 At once the Holy Spirit sent him out into the desert and he was in the desert for forty days where the devil tempted him and angels took care of him.

Have you travelled to far off countries?
Have you ever been to a desert? A real desert?

Fiercely hot in the day and freezing cold at night?
Exhausted by day and can't sleep at night.

Ever gone for a walk and got lost where every turn looks just like
the one before and there is no hope of an end?
Or had a car breakdown
or run out of petrol
and been waiting for rescue?



Those anxieties are common experiences
for people today in Sandy



You can be in a desert in a city as
well as a wilderness.

You can feel like you are in a
desert within your own mind
and heart.

To feel lost and alone and
anxious is a common experience
at any time but especially during
this pandemic.



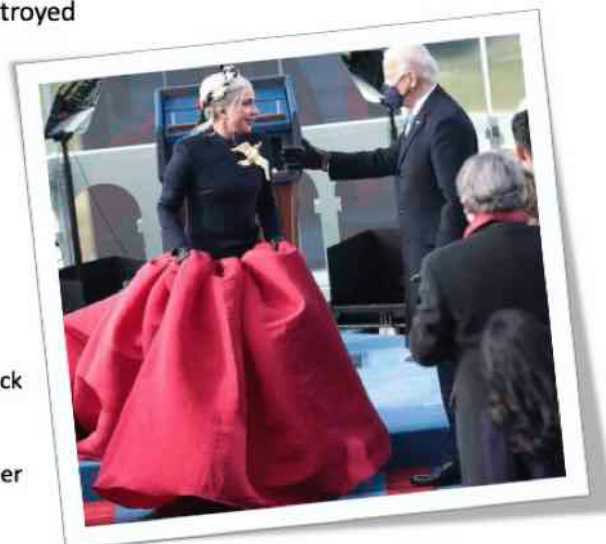
President Joe Biden

Wife and daughter killed in car accident
Son died of cancer
Broken hearted but not destroyed

Lady Gaga

Mental Health Advocate

"I learned that my sadness
never destroyed what was great
about me. You just have to go back
to that greatness, find that one
little light that's left.
I'm lucky I found one little glimmer
stored away."

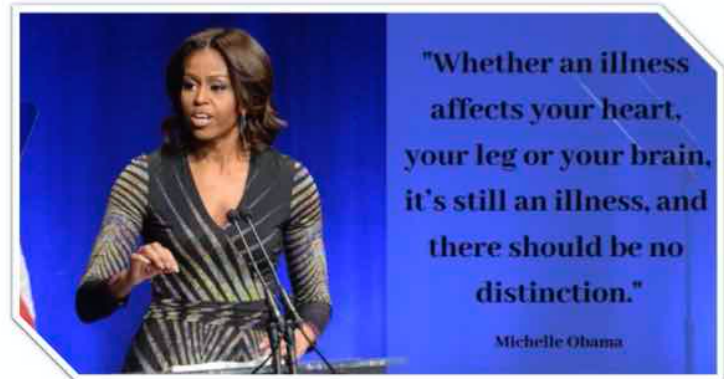


Jon Hamm

Actor / director

"Medical attention is medical attention
whether it's for your elbow
or for your teeth or for your brain.
And it's important.

We live in a world where to admit
anything negative about yourself
is seen as a weakness,
when it's actually a strength.
It's not a weak to say, 'I need help.'
In the long run it's way better,
because you have to fix it."



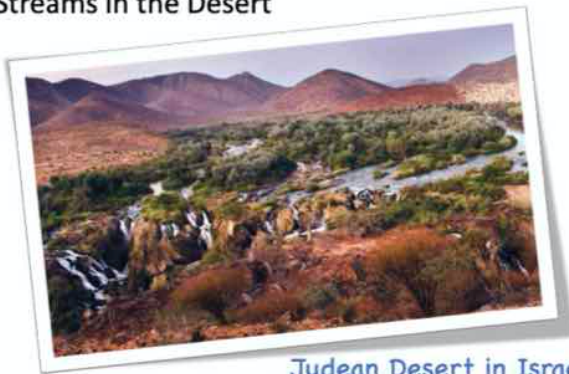
"Whether an illness
affects your heart,
your leg or your brain,
it's still an illness, and
there should be no
distinction."

Michelle Obama

In distress?

Support can be found by calling NHS advisory helpline on telephone no. 111

The theme for the sermons in Lent
Leading up to Easter is finding
Streams in the Desert



Judean Desert in Israel

Blue Planet Okavango Delta Kalahari Desert Botswana
More than any where else on the planet is seen the transforming
power of water to bring new life David Attenborough





The prophet Isaiah spoke of a coming King whose followers would be like streams in the desert and a shelter from the wind to those around them.

Isaiah 32

Look and see, a righteous king is coming!
And honest princes will rule under him.
Each one will be like a shelter from the wind
and a refuge from the storm,
like streams of water in the desert
and the shadow of a great rock in a parched land.

Evolution of the Book

- Papyrus scrolls – up to 35 feet long (about the length of book of Matthew)
 - Original “autographs” – written on papyrus
- Codex – book with leaves of parchment
 - Christians among first to use the codex widely, by end of 1st century
- Scrolls and books were very valuable



Mathew chapter 1	Jesus' birth	5 verses
Luke chapter 1	John Baptist's birth	75 verses

Mathew and Luke's Gospels were 35 foot long scrolls

John's Gospel approx 30 foot Mark's approx 20 foot



John 20: 30-31

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John 21:24-25

I am the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. I promise you my testimony is true. Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

So if not everything could be recorded about Jesus and his life

It is an interesting question as to why the Gospel writers chose to include what they did and what to leave out. Some of them group Jesus' miracles together and others group his teachings and parables together.

Which is why to get the whole story we need to read all four Gospels.

Matthew has 5 verses about Jesus' birth (excluding the 'three Kings' / Magi)
Mark and John don't have any stories about Jesus' birth.

Luke uses 130 verses in his telling of the story of Jesus' birth
75 of those are about the circumstances around the birth of John the Baptist

All four Gospels begin with Jesus coming to be baptized by John
All four of them have these words
"I baptize you with water but Jesus will baptize you with the Holy Spirit"

Why? Surely it must be important!



This window in the west end of the church at St Swithuns in Sandy pictures Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist.

Chosen by a committee - John Kitchener

A quote from John ch.3
"Unless a person is born of water and the Spirit they can not enter the kingdom of heaven. You must be born again"

How ?
Repent and be baptized as a sign of a change of heart.

What does that mean?
Pray and say to God
Sorry, Please and Thank you



Baptise –
To soak
To flood
To immerse
To wash thoroughly
To fill to overflowing



Ephesians 5

"Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

¹⁵ Be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise make the most of every opportunity in these evil days.

Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do and don't just get drunk with wine as a way out of trouble and anxiety because that will ruin your life.

**Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit,
and keep on being re-filled whenever you leak !**
Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourself
and making music to the Lord in your hearts.
²⁰ And give thanks for everything to God the Father
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As Christians we all have the Holy Spirit within us but we can so easily settle for lukewarm and become complacent.

Turn the power up!
You were made for more!

Read Revelation ch.3 v.14-22



This experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit is like a multi-faceted diamond

It's like a banquet table with dozens of plates on offer each so tasty and filling



It's about experiencing the fruit of the Spirit in every day living



It's about connecting to God and experiencing his power to get the job done



Worship and
good deeds

James ch.1 & 2

North aisle
window



Bring your anxieties to Jesus in prayer and experience his resurrection power
Ephesians 1 v. 15-22 1 Peter 5:7 Hebrews 4 v 8 – 16

This week why not read Paul's second letter to the Corinthians
for your encouragement. In which chapter and verses does Paul say:
"When I am at my weakest then I experience His strength"