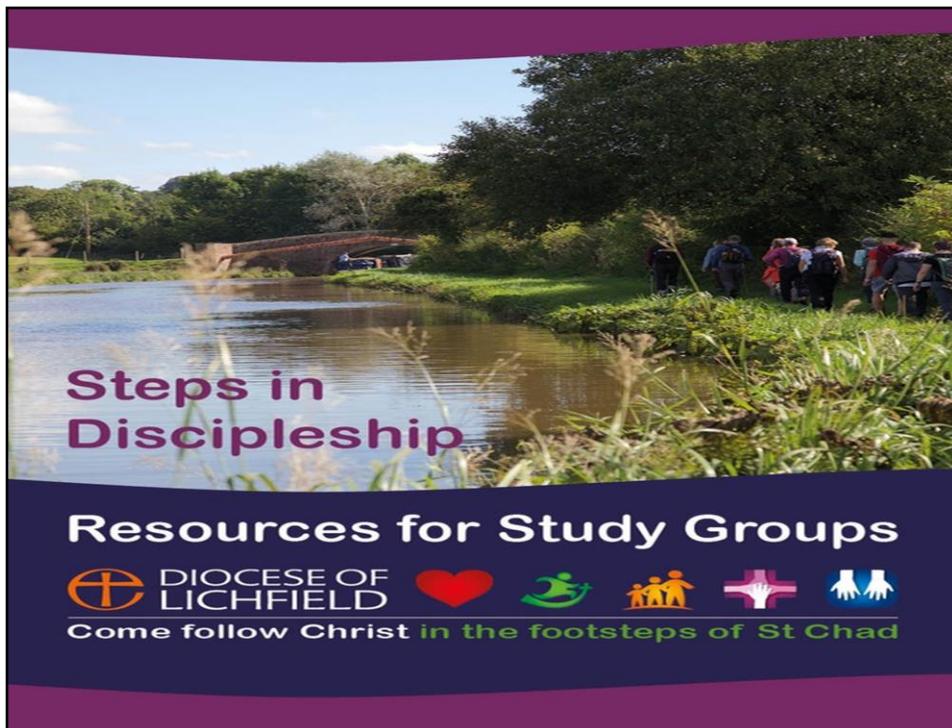
A photograph of a stone wall with a grid-like pattern of rectangular stones. The text is overlaid in the center in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

**THEN JESUS ASKED,
"WHO DO YOU SAY I
AM?" PETER
ANSWERED, "YOU
ARE THE CHRIST."**

- MARK 8:29 -

The prequel or proceeding verses to our reading today carry the account of Peter professing that Jesus is the Messiah – God in human flesh on earth – the long promised Saviour of Israel and the world was here.

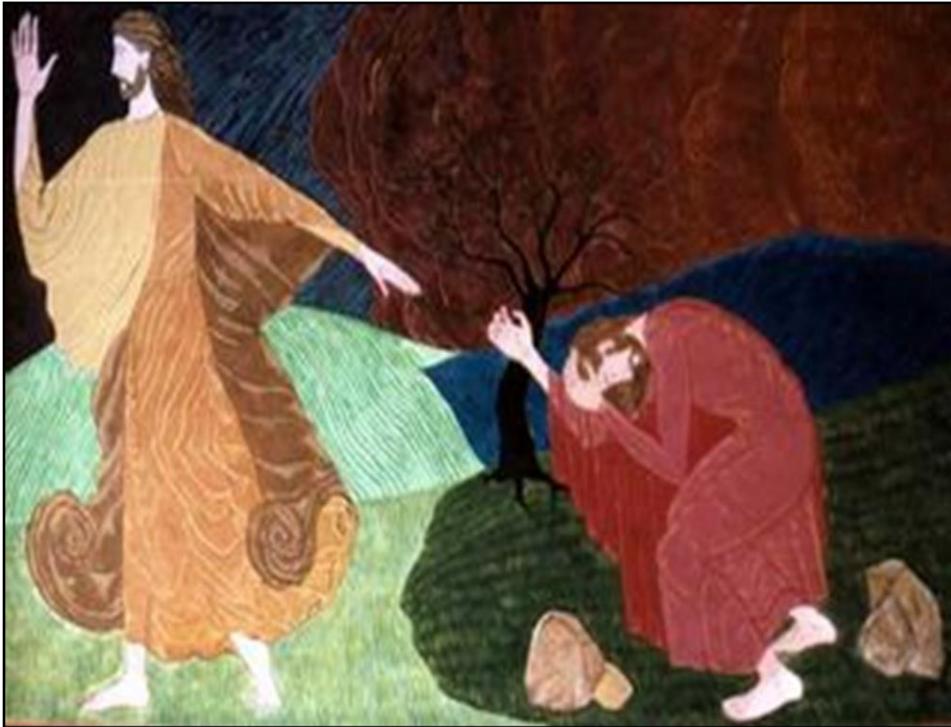


What we going to unpack this morning also fits with the first of the Lent Studies that we did on Tuesday...

Perhaps not surprising, the sermons through Lent, will no doubt find a connection with the Lent series week by week.

The link to the study is also on our website

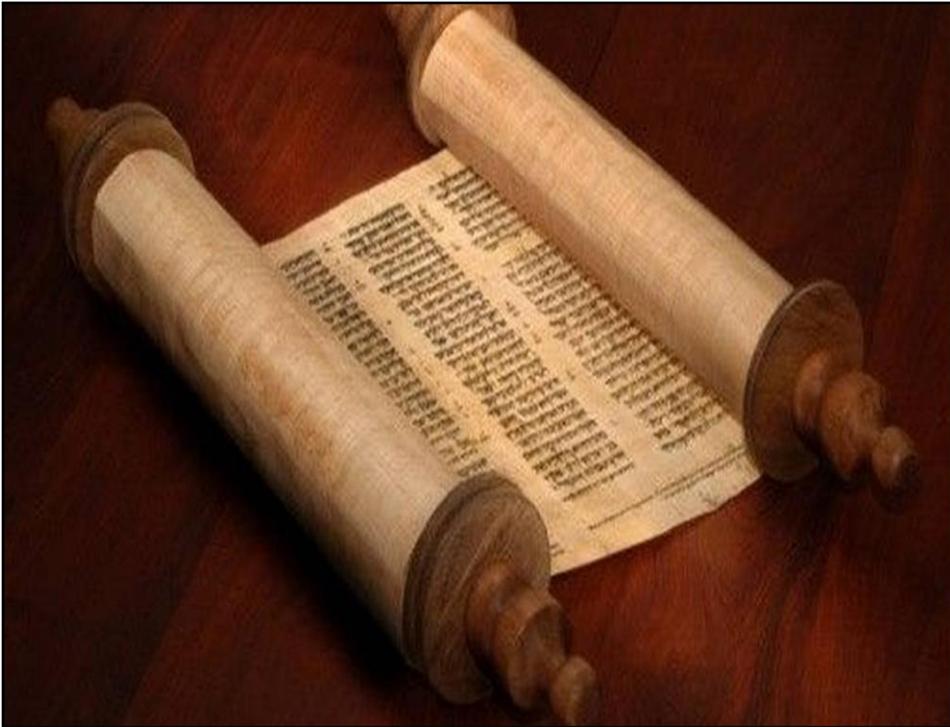
<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/documents/steps-discipleship-2018-lent-booklet/>



Back in the narrative, the same Peter who was blessed by Jesus then gets told by Jesus that he is satan!

It seems a harsh accusation – and yet the words are often justified by explaining that perhaps it was because Peter was trying to not let His Lord and Master be killed.

And as only the Romans were allowed to execute anybody that meant crucifixion.

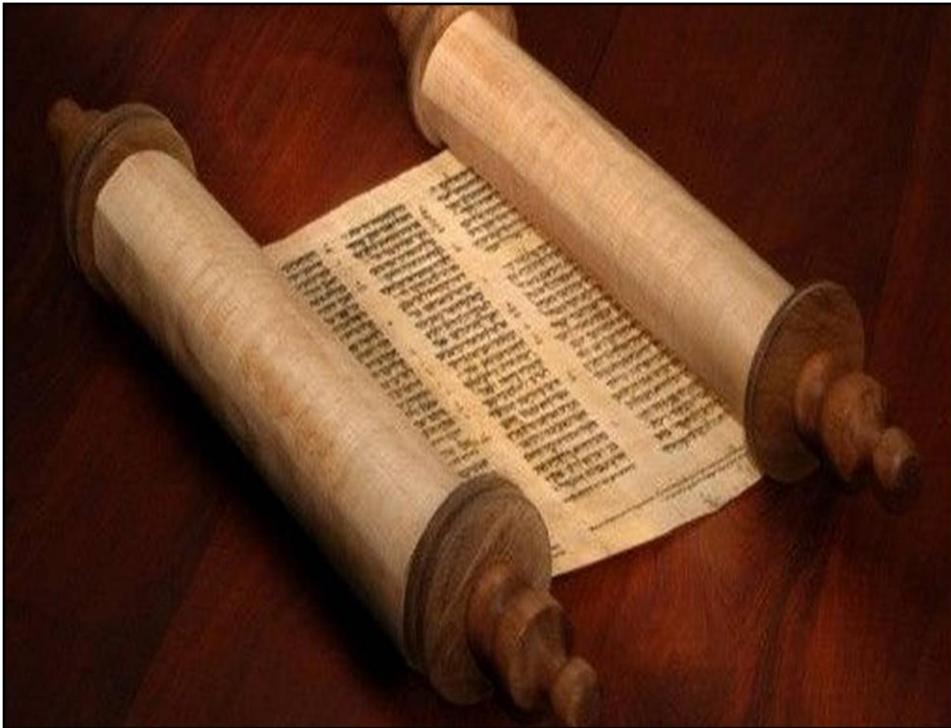


The disciples of First Century Judaism learned everything from their teacher, and they learned to be just like their teacher. They learned the stories that the teacher told.

They learned the lessons that their teacher taught.

They learned to eat the foods that their teacher ate, the way their teacher ate them. They learned to keep the Sabbath the way their teacher kept Sabbath and to give charity the way their teacher gave charity.

They learned to pray the way their teacher prayed and to fast the way their teacher fasted.



They learned how to keep God's commands the way their teacher kept them. The disciples followed their teacher everywhere he went, and the teacher taught his disciples everything he could.

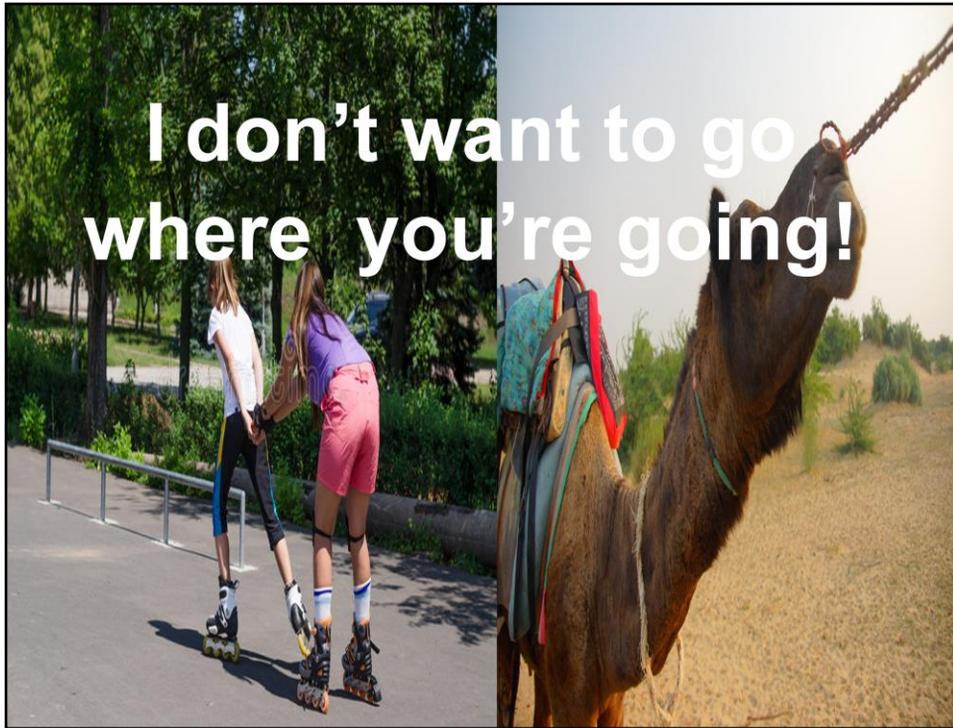
Then, after a disciple was fully trained, he would become a teacher and teach disciples of his own. A disciple's job was to become like his or her teacher. So it written for us in the Gospel:

"Every disciple fully trained will be like his teacher." (Luke 6:40).



The disciples of a rabbi followed behind as they walked – they were covered by his dust, they quite literally walked where he walked and lived and learned in his shadow.

Where the rabbi, his disciples went.



Perhaps you can see where this may have been heading (In Peter's thinking?)...

Jesus, their Rabbi, tells his disciples that he must suffer, then be put to death in the most agonising & degrading way then known (cursed is he who hangs upon a tree Gal 3:13/Deut. 21) and left naked in death for all the world to see.



Perhaps this just wasn't where Peter and no doubt the others wanted to go and follow Jesus..



Jesus told them he would rise again – but the disciples didn't seem to grasp this or remember it.

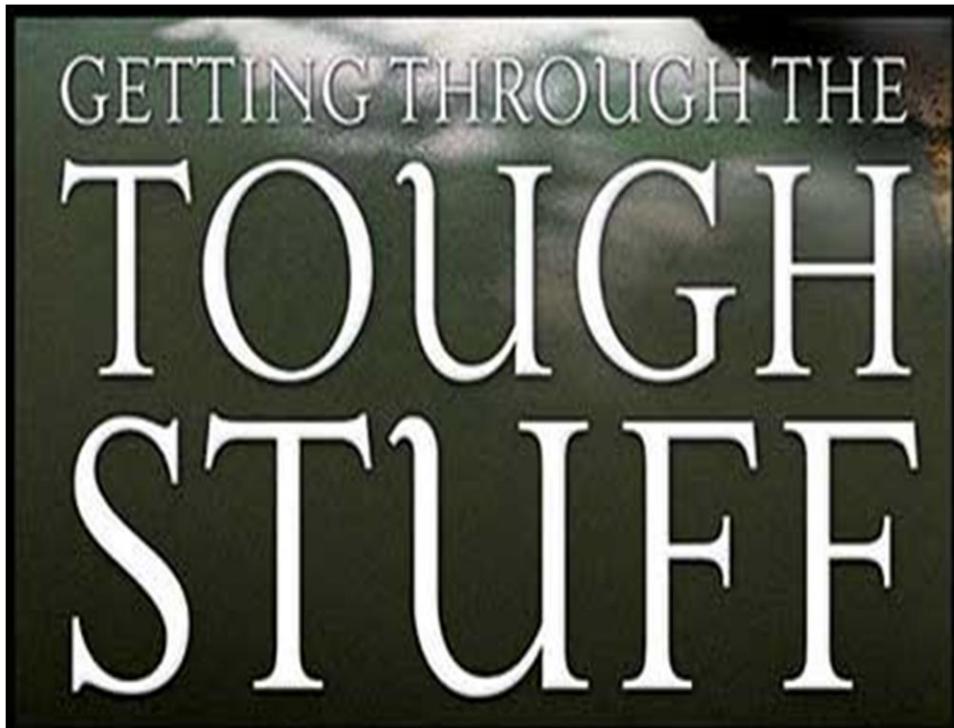


In Peter's mind if this is suffering future is what will happen to Jesus, their rabbi, then as His disciples, it is or could be their experience too. They were His chosen disciples, and ***this*** is what Jesus is offering to them?



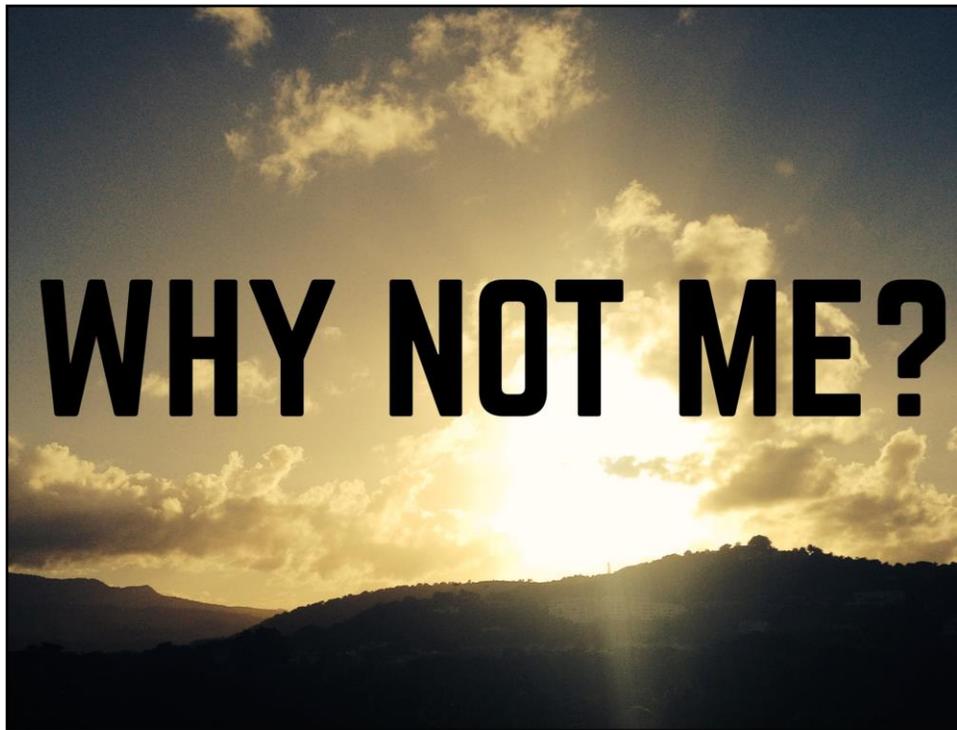
Like those first disciples we'd rather be following Jesus along the quiet shores of Lake Galilee, with gentle waves lapping beside us and the sun just about as warm as on a pleasant British Summer's day.

It's a calming picture – but it can be from the reality of how life is.



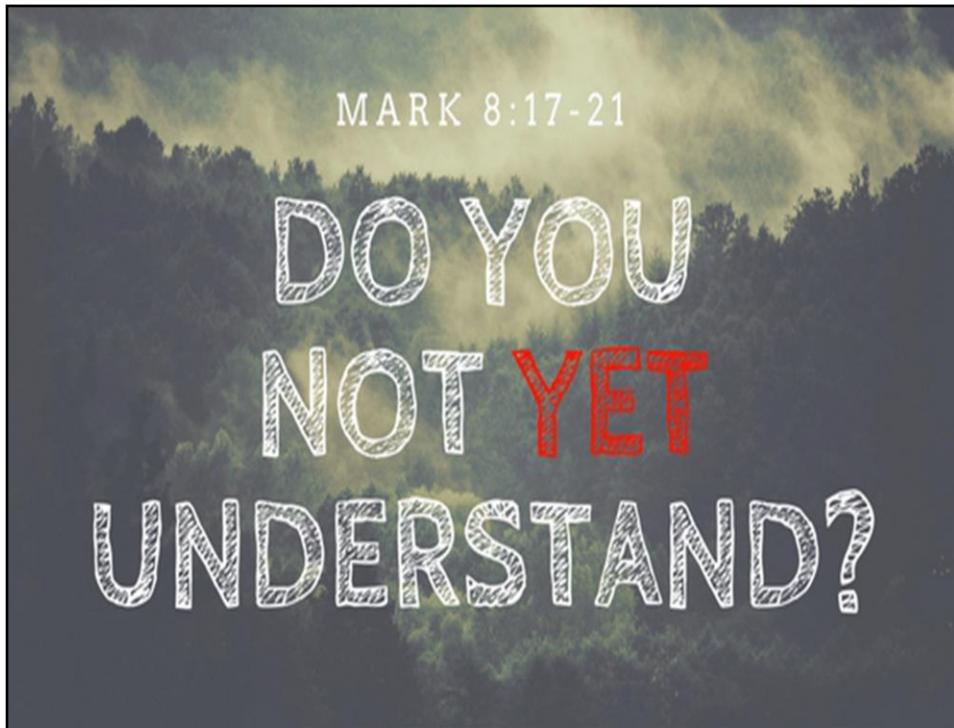
GETTING THROUGH THE
TOUGH
STUFF

If we're honest – as much as we may be bold and have bravado in our younger days and when all is going well – when the tough stuff of life comes along, we'd rather not be facing suffering. It takes strength of faith, even hanging on by your fingertips sort of faith to say 'Why *not* me?' rather to shout at God 'Why *me?!*'



But this is what our faith, our discipleship our following Jesus is about.

It is about walking in the footsteps of Jesus.



The disciples were baffled; Peter spoke for them all; they could see no merit in walking to the same death that Jesus was prophesying for himself.

THE REST OF THE STORY...

We know how the events in the Gospels end; death & then resurrection.

The disciples had no experience or knowledge of that Easter Day.

Once they realised that Jesus died for them and then rose again proving and showing that He had conquered death *then* their attitude changed.

We read these words of Jesus knowing how the narrative ends – we can live no matter how hard or tough our circumstances, knowing that through Jesus we are sure of our Eternity with God.

God Wants to Spend Eternity with You

Have you ever thought that even **more** than you wanting to be with God for Eternity in heaven, He want to spend Eternity with **you!** That wanting to be with you begins in this life – not the next.



God has no favourites – Jesus died once and for all upon His Cross – each and every person is God’s favourite, no matter what we’ve done or not done.

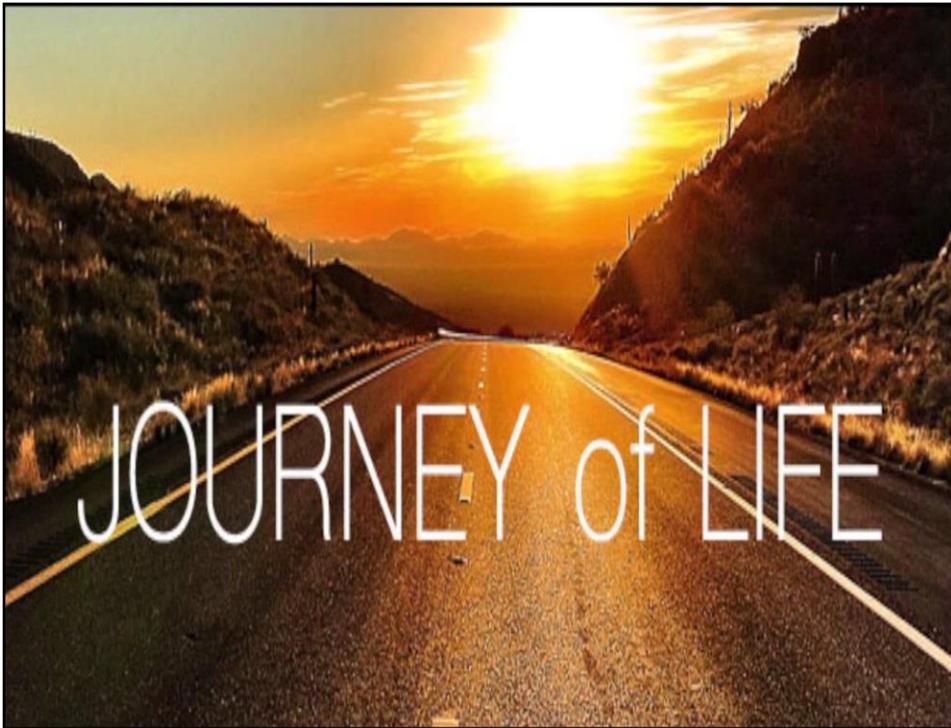


It can be asked of Christians, ‘Does God like what this world can do to us?’

No, He doesn’t – that’s why God doesn’t leave us to our own devices. If we reach out to God, He’ll take us and lead us – sometimes removing us from the tough stuff we are living through, sometimes giving us the strength and means to live through it.



An analogy I like about our faith in God is that it is reaching out in the darkness and finding our hand held – and it's God who's doing the holding.



In truth there are not many people who live through from their birth into their golden years free from life's anguishes, but how we live, and who we put our faith and trust in determines and shapes our life journey at each and every turn.



Jesus was following the path laid out for Him; the first disciples were called to follow Jesus's footsteps in faith; and we are asked to Jesus to fall in line with all the saints who gone before us.

And like them, we **choose** to say to Jesus 'I want to go where you are going and where you have already gone'