

Desert, parts 1-5 [entirely instrumental]

This was used as a Lent. It's in 5 parts, each of two minutes (representing one week in the desert), and I used the first minute of each section to speak some words about Jesus' time in the desert, especially about his temptations. Then the second minute of each bit was left for reflection. I've included the notes that I used below, but again it's really better for people to write stuff that works for them. The sections are roughly:

Introduction (representing Ash Wednesday to the first Sunday, perhaps, but just a time to settle into a reflective mood)

Part One - Jesus baptism & being driven into the desert

Part Two - the reality of desert desolation; rather wraithy!

Part Three - "If you're the Son of God..."

Part Four - The devil quotes scripture "Throw yourself down...", lots of angst & desperation

Part Five - Devil tries to strike a deal, but leaves the scene until Good Friday. A slightly more positive mood to end.

Bill

Five 1-minute reflections on Jesus' Desert Experience, with space for your own meditations

1/ 'Just as he was coming up out of the water, Jesus saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.' Mk1:10-12

Jesus' baptism – a time for celebration surely? But the HS's first task is to literally drive Jesus into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. What a high to a low. The baptism party's on hold – instead of a feast, Jesus has stones for fast food for the next 6 weeks. Is this how he imagined his glorious ministry on earth would begin? [45"]

2/ So why the desert? What's there of any use? Nothing surely. There's the rub. A place of vulnerability, of bones; close to death; a place to pass through on the way to somewhere better; not somewhere to dwell; a place of demons, home turf to the devil; a place of desperation and, giving up.

Also: a place where God is often very close to his people; a place of refuge, as well as testing; a place of bleaching, cleansing and consecration; a place of John the Baptist, of Elijah; the place of 'the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord' Mk1:3 [50"]

3/ Temptation 1: After 40 days of fasting, Jesus must be at his physical weakest. The devil, no doubt on his best form, roars up in front of him, and starts to make this whole desert thing personal with screwy talk. Tempting him to join him in breakfast. "If you're the Son of God..." that baptism must seem to Jesus an eternity ago. But he's having none of it – there are more important things than bread, especially if "the bread of life" is your middle name. The one thing that isn't changed by any earthly circumstances is the word of God. Deut8:3 'He humbled you by letting you hunger In order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.' First round to Jesus [50"]

4/ Temptation 2: Undaunted, the devil shifts emphasis to the support that Jesus will be relying on for his work on Earth. "Throw yourself down, just to prove the angels'll

catch you. They said they would...” and for once only, we hear the devil quote scripture, Psalm 91. It must stick in his throat. He is starting to sweat. But Jesus’ relationship with his Father is one of love and trust, not suspicion and doubt, and true faith doesn’t run tests. Furthermore, he doesn’t like the idea of misusing scripture for your own ends. If the devil had read just one more line of the Psalm, it promises victory over the forces of evil. If this ordeal is meant to prove the infallibility of Jesus even in the face of terrible adversity, then he’s well on his way to earning his stripes. Second round is his. [55”]

5/ Temptation 3: Now the devil’s in trouble – in fact he knows he’s beat. He tries to strike a deal, a collaboration that offers Jesus the easy way out. Sidestepping that pesky cross and all. Surely that’s not really necessary? It must have been supremely tempting. Jesus knew full well what was in store for him. But some cheap solutions are simply too costly. Can we spot when a tempting offer is actually making us give up something too dear to us? We must be on alert for the things that are too good to be true, and be true to our faith at any cost.

The devil screams away in a cloud of dust, not to return on the scene again in person until Good Friday. The winner is Jesus with no falls, and the angels do come as promised, and tend to his needs in his victory in the first major battle. [55”]