

LENT 2024

# JOURNEY *to* FREEDOM

## PREFACE

Has a greater story ever been told? Exodus has all the ingredients. A flawed hero in Moses. An arch-baddie in Pharaoh. The appalling injustice of slavery. The vivid horrors of the plagues. The jeopardy of a last minute escape. The hyper-real psycho-drama of the wilderness. The promise of a glorious freedom. What more could you want? Well there's much more! As you read through this wonderful book, look out for the following.

### **The Story of God's Covenant**

From start to finish, Exodus shows us God's faithfulness to His people. He is with them in slavery and raises up the leader whose unique mix of qualities and experience He will use to set them free. He sees off mighty Pharaoh and rescues His people in the Sea. He shows them through the Ten Commandments how to live and, when again and again they fail and fall into sin, He does not give up on them.

As you read, see yourself in those struggling Israelites. In the twenty first century, it can be hard for us to go on being faithful, faced with the mighty pharaohs of secularism, materialism and greed. We too can easily drift off into sin and mistrust, doubting the presence of God or His work in our lives. But our faithful God never lets us go. Lent is the time to repent and turn back to Him, to be faithful to the covenant God who is always faithful to us.

### **The Gospel Story Anticipated**

He may not be named, but we can find Jesus on every page of the Book of Exodus. We can find Him in fire. As Moses hears God's voice in the burning bush, so we see anticipated the fire of the Holy Spirit, the gift of Jesus to His church, who equips and sends for the mission.

We can find Him in the lamb. The blood of a slain lamb smeared on the doorposts of the Israelites to free them from the angel of death points us to the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, whose death on the cross sets us free.

We can find Him in water and bread. The water of the Red Sea, through which the Israelites escape Pharaoh's army, points us to the water of baptism in which we are born anew. The manna in the wilderness points us to Jesus, the living bread, who feeds us in the Eucharist.

Above all we can find Him in the big-picture sweep of the narrative. Just as the Israelites are saved by God from slavery, so through the whole saving work of Jesus we are ransomed from our slavery to sin and death and set free for eternity. That's why Exodus is the Lent book par excellence. It points us to the whole saving work of Christ.

Has a greater story ever been told? Yes! The story of Jesus Himself. And as we tell the Exodus story, something more of the wonder of that Gospel story is revealed.

### **The Diocesan Lent Course**

This book will take you through the story of Exodus bit by bit, helping you to understand it in detail. A great way of exploring in more depth some of the big themes of Exodus is through our Diocesan Lent Course. This course can be followed either in parish groups or individually. Go to the Diocesan Website ([www.blackburn.anglican.org](http://www.blackburn.anglican.org)) and you will find five short videos that I have recorded in different parts of the City of Lancaster and a written resource.

### **The Rt Revd Philip North, Bishop of Blackburn**