

Monthly Devotion

MARCH

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.”

Isaiah 61:1



shallowfordhouse.org

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion - to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour.

Isaiah 61:1-3

If you are visiting Shallowford House during this period of Lent, you may have had the opportunity to spend some peaceful time in the grounds. During this time you may well have seen one of the three peacocks who live here; Shallowford is home to two male peacocks and one female. At this time of year, the male birds are in full glory, and their tail feathers are magnificent. You may be fortunate enough to see one of the male birds spread his beautiful tail feathers, called a 'train'. The ensuing circular dance to attract the pea hen is called 'train rattling' and is most impressive.

Lent is not a time when we necessarily focus on beautiful things, more concentrating on the darker moments around sin, temptation and the cruelty of the Cross. We consider our own fragility as we reflect on the Lenten tradition of ashes.

Genesis 3:19

'By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.'



Yet we can find divine beauty within the "ashes" of brokenness, mortality, and repentance. Lent challenges us to shift our focus from superficial, fleeting beauty to the enduring, sacrificial, beautiful love of Jesus Christ and what that means for each of us.

Within this sombre time, we can find great beauty; not outward displays of adornment but beauty within. The season of Lent allows us to undertake a deep spiritual 'reset', focusing on 'uncluttering our souls' rather than worrying about our outward appearance. We may want to prayerfully consider what resetting our spiritual focus looks like as we journey through Lent; how it affects us and our relationship with others.

In the 1993 song 'Beauty for Brokenness, (God of the Poor) singer-songwriter, and worship leader, Graham Kendrick wrote about beauty being found in brokenness. The song was written as a wakeup call to challenge Christians to consider how the love and beauty of God can be actively seen working power and compassion amongst the weak and the marginalised:

**'Friend of the weak
Give us compassion we pray.
Melt our cold hearts
Let tears fall like rain.
Come, change our love
From a spark to a flame.'**

Graham Kendrick

*Copyright © 1993 Make Way Music,
www.grahamkendrick.co.uk*

During this season of Lent we can challenge ourselves to bring beauty to the brokenness of this world as we make our pilgrimage to the foot Cross.



shallowfordhouse.org

'Come change our love from a spark to a flame'

This is love.

Not that you spoke words of comfort,
walked with the unclean and unloved,
shared wisdom, bread and fish,
brought healing into lives
and challenged the status quo.

This is love.

That you spoke the word of God,
walked a painful road to the Cross,
shared living water, bread of life,
brought Salvation to the world
and died for the sake of all.

This is love.

It is a seed
sown in the ground,
which germinates,
blossoms,
and spreads its sweet perfume.

Amen

John Birch Faith and Worship

Our monthly devotion is written by Susan Hutchinson
for shallowfordhouse.org

To subscribe to Susan's **DAILY** devotion visit:
St. Michael's Church, Rocester facebook page
or scan the QR code

