

CANON MARK'S DAILY DEVOTIONALS #296 16TH – 20TH MARCH 2026

MONDAY

I WAS KEEPING IT ALL TOGETHER, LIKE THE BIG BOY I AM, UNTIL I READ CANON MARK'S DEVOTIONAL....

16th March – Morning all, today's a sad day, my dad has to have his dog Barney put to sleep. Barney has lived a long life, but the time has come when he simply doesn't have the energy anymore. His body can't keep up with the life he once had. Anyone who has loved a pet knows how much they become part of the rhythm of a home, the quiet presence, the way they seem to sense when you need company. They ask for very little, yet somehow give so much. And the hardest part of loving anything is that one day we have to let it go. "The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." (Psalm 34:18) The Bible is very honest about moments like this. God never pretends that loss doesn't hurt. Whether it's the loss of a person, or even a loyal companion like Barney, grief is simply the price we pay for love. But what strikes me about dogs is how simply and faithfully they love. They're always pleased to see you. They don't hold grudges. They're content just being near the people they belong to. In a strange way, they remind us of things we sometimes forget, loyalty, joy in ordinary moments, and the comfort of simply being present with someone you love. So today will be a hard day. There will be sadness in saying goodbye. But there can also be gratitude, gratitude for the years shared, the quiet companionship, and the memories that stay long after the house feels a little quieter. And perhaps it's also a gentle reminder of something deeper: the God who created every living thing understands our grief. He sees the love behind the tears. And He is close, especially on days like this.

Revd Canon Mark Spiers

TUESDAY

I VISITED CHRIST CHURCH, EXMOUTH TODAY FOR THE FUNERAL OF A DEAR FRIEND, THE REVD JOHN EUSTICE. IT WAS A JOY TO BE THERE AND BE ASKED TO PRONOUNCE THE FINAL BLESSING AT THE END OF THE CHURCH SERVICE. A SIMPLE CHANCE TO JUST SAY, 'THANK YOU' LORD.

17th March – Morning all... I heard a story recently about a little boy who had a habit of saying "thank you" at the most unexpected times. Not for big things. Not when he got a present or something exciting. But for small, almost unnoticed moments. He'd say thank you for his breakfast. Thank you for his journey to school. Thank you when someone simply sat with him. One day, someone asked him why he said thank you so much. He shrugged and said something like, "Because I don't want to forget." That stayed with me. If I'm honest, I don't usually forget the hard things. I remember the stress, the awkward conversations, the things that didn't go right. Those seem to stick quite naturally. But the good? The ordinary kindness? The quiet moments where nothing dramatic happens but everything is actually okay? Those are the things I tend to overlook. Then this verse makes a bit more sense: "Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done." (Psalm 105:1) So, maybe gratitude isn't meant to be complicated or forced. Maybe it's simply about not forgetting. Not forgetting the small provisions. Not forgetting the ways God has quietly carried us through moments we didn't even realise we'd get through. That little boy had it right in a way. He wasn't waiting for something big before he said thank you. He was just paying attention. And maybe that's the invitation for us today. Not to manufacture some deep emotional response... just to notice and not forget.

Revd Canon Mark Spiers

WEDNESDAY

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL INVITES YOU TO PAUSE AND RECONSIDER WHERE TRUE STRENGTH LIES. NOT IN WHAT OVERWHELMS YOU FROM THE OUTSIDE, BUT IN WHAT GENTLY, FAITHFULLY ABIDES WITHIN.

18th March – Morning all... "Sometimes," said Winnie-the-Pooh, "the smallest things take up the most room in your heart." It's a simple, childlike line, but there's something quietly powerful in it. Because if

we're honest, it doesn't always feel like that. Most days it's the big things that take up the space, the pressure, the noise, the worry about what's going on in the world and in our own lives. It can feel overwhelming, like everything around us is louder and stronger than we are. And that's why I love this verse of scripture: "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4) It doesn't shout. It doesn't try to compete with the noise. It just quietly tells the truth. The problem is we sometimes think that we expect God's strength to feel obvious, like confidence, like certainty, like having it all together. But often, it's much quieter than that. It's the small, steady presence that keeps you going when you feel like you're running on empty. A bit like that quote, the smallest things, the unseen things, can carry more weight than we realise. So today, if the world feels loud or a bit overwhelming, don't just look at what's around you. Remember what's within you. Not your strength. Not your ability to cope. But His presence. And that, even when it feels small is greater than anything you're facing.

Revd Canon Mark Spiers

THURSDAY

I REMEMBER THE CHORUS WE USED TO SING IN SUNDAY SCHOOL BASED ON THIS TEXT - IT FOLLOWS THE SCRIPTURE ALMOST WORD FOR WORD. 'SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME, ALL THE DAYS, ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE (Repeat) AND I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER AND I WILL SIT AT THE TABLE SET FOR ME...' PERHAPS YOU REMEMBER IT TOO?

19th March – Morning all... "Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life..." (Psalm 23:6) I used to read this verse and picture something gentle and distant, like goodness and love politely walking a few steps behind me, keeping their distance. But the older I get, the more I realise life doesn't always feel that calm. Some days feel messy. You make mistakes. You say things you wish you hadn't. You carry worries you can't quite shake. And if you're honest, it's easy to feel like what's following you is stress, regret, or pressure and not goodness and love. Then David writes this with such certainty: Surely.... I was thinking about someone who once said to me, "I feel like I'm always trying to catch up, like I'm behind in life somehow." That stuck with me, because I think a lot of us feel that in different ways. Like we're chasing something, peace, stability, a sense of being okay. But this verse quietly flips that idea. It says you're not the one doing the chasing. God's goodness and love are the ones pursuing you. Even on the days when we don't feel particularly faithful. Even when we get things wrong. They don't give up. They don't fall behind. They don't wait for us to get everything together first. They follow, and not just on the good days, all the days of your life.

Revd Canon Mark Spiers

FRIDAY

TOMORROW IS SYNOD FOR THE SOUTHERN DIOCESE. I PRAY THOSE THAT GATHER AT CHRIST CHURCH, HARLESDEN WILL FIND OUR TIME TOGETHER A REAL BLESSING.

20th March – Morning all... When you think of an action hero, it's easy to picture the big moments, running into danger, sirens, everything on the line. But if I'm honest, most of the real courage I see day to day doesn't look anything like that. It looks like getting up when you're exhausted and doing it all again. Holding back the words you could say in the heat of the moment. Turning up for a conversation you'd rather avoid. Trying to be kind when you're already worn thin. No one really notices those moments. There's no applause. But they take something out of you. And I think that's often the hardest part, it's not one big act of bravery, it's lots of small ones, quietly spread across an ordinary day. I've been thinking about that moment when Jesus washed His disciples' feet. It's such a simple picture, but when you stop and sit with it, it's powerful. Jesus, knowing exactly who was around that table, knowing what was coming, still kneels down and serves. No fuss. No recognition. Just love in action. Even knowing He would be betrayed. Even knowing He would be denied. And still... He chose to love like that. "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet." (John 13:14) That's what Lent keeps bringing us back to. Not big, dramatic moments, but the quiet, daily choice to lay something down. But maybe that's the point. Because this is where following Jesus actually happens, not in the big moments, but in the small, unseen ones where we choose love anyway. The small choices matter more than you realise. They're slowly, quietly shaping us into people who look a little bit more like Him.

Revd Canon Mark Spiers