

Saturday 21st November

Numbers 14: 26-45

Key Verses 14: 42-43

'Do not go up, because the Lord is not with you. You will be defeated by your enemies, for the Amalekites and the Canaanites will face you there. Because you have turned away from the Lord, he will not be with you and you will fall by the sword.'

When Moses relays God's message back to the Israelites they realise their mistake and try to make a futile attempt to put things right. God saw through their weeping and their actions as they decided to do what God had asked in the first place. Were they trying to appease God?!! It was too late. As they went up to the hill country of the Promised Land they were attacked and failed in their quest. God did not confuse their actions born of guilt with true repentance and was not with them. He had already said that they should set out towards the Red Sea (v25) so, yet again, they were disobeying God. (As Moses also points out in v41)

Right actions and good intentions are no good if they come too late and will be fruitless if God is not with us!

This generation suffered a lifetime in the wilderness because of their sin. God was angry with them for the whole time according to Psalm 95: 10 but in Dt 8 vs 2-5 (please read), Moses points to the bigger picture of God's great plan of salvation. God had still led and guided the people in the desert and his purpose for them was to teach them humility, obedience and dependence on God.

When the people got hungry God gave them manna but even this was to teach much more important lesson. Jesus quoted the words of Moses when he was tempted by the devil (also in the wilderness!!)

'Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord' (Dt 8v3, Luke 4v4)

How blessed are we to have the whole Word of God contained in a book that we clearly must feed on in the same way that we feed our physical bodies.

God is turning the wilderness years into a learning experience, an act of parental discipline and an opportunity for grace and obedience.

Some of us may feel we are living in the wilderness because of some past act of rebellion or disobedience to God. God is love. God is patient. Remember Jesus has now taken the punishment for our sin but we may be left in the wilderness for a while because, as a wise and loving father does with his children, he is shaping us for the future!