

**Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2026**

from WITNESS to SUFFERING

St Barnabas | Christ Church | St Wulstans

**ABIDE for Easter 2026**

## **THE STARTING PLACE**

Take a moment to see how many sentences you can make that include the word *witness*.

## **LISTENING TO ACTS**

Our reading this time is [Acts 7:55–60](#), but you may well want to read the [fuller account](#) of Stephen's final moments which begins a chapter earlier. Look out for the presence of the different ways you used the word *witness* in the previous question. Are they all there? Are there any present that you did not include to begin with?

## **LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL**

Read Thomas and Phillip in conversation with Jesus on the night of his arrest in [John 14:1-14](#). As you listen to their questions and Jesus's answers, what kind of life does Jesus suggest awaits those who bear witness to him?

## **LISTENING TO PETER**

Peter writes today as someone who lived long enough to see both Jesus' promises and the suffering of those who bear witness to him. What strands of wisdom do you find in his reflections?

1 Peter 3:13–4:19

Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same intention (for whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin), so as to live for the rest of your earthly life no longer by human desires but by the will of God ... The end of all things is near; therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or even as a mischief-maker. Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name. For the time has come for judgement to begin with the household of God; if it begins with us, what will be the end for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And *'If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinners?'* Therefore, let those suffering in accordance with God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good.

## **THE THRESHOLD**

Where have you noticed that faithfulness to Christ carries even a small cost in your own life? How willingly did you pay it?

## **MOVING FORWARD**

Think about struggles that churches face and ones that you carry personally. As you read Peter's words this week, is there any of them you might begin to see differently, or find more bearable?

## A Prayer for this Week

*Generous God, whose way is love, whose truth is searching, whose life is freely given in Jesus Christ our Lord: may we too make a place for the rejected and unloved and share in your work of peace. Amen.*

There are ABIDE groups this week at the Vicarage

**WEDNESDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> MAY AT 7PM** and **FRIDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> MAY AT 10.30AM**