

Sunday 4 February 2024 – Second Sunday before Lent

Sermon by Anne-Marie Renshaw

An audio recording of the sermon will be available after the service at [Sermons \(tk-tiptree-braxted-benefice.org.uk\)](https://tk-tiptree-braxted-benefice.org.uk)

I love books. My house is full of them. I always have several on the go. But books only take you so far. Reading a recipe book isn't the same thing as tasting the food. Looking at a map book isn't the same as going to the place. Reading a biography is not the same as meeting the person. And reading about God in the Bible is not the same as knowing God.

John describes Jesus as the Word of God. God's words have tremendous power. Think back to the description of the world's creation in Genesis: God speaks creation into being. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. Jesus shows the power of his words when he heals people, not always by toughing them or doing anything to them, but often just by speaking to them: "Your faith has healed you," or, "Your sins are forgiven." He speaks healing into people's lives. John understands Jesus to be God's powerful word in human flesh.

Knowing Jesus helped the first disciples to know God. At the last supper, Jesus told them that, if they had seen him, then they had also seen God. We too get to know God through Jesus. We do this not just through reading about Jesus, although this is important too, but by inviting Jesus to be part of our lives, by spending time with Jesus in prayer, by talking about Jesus with others, by picturing Jesus walking alongside us everywhere we go.

This Lent, our Bible studies will focus on five episodes where people got close to Jesus and were changed by the relationship. We will be looking at Mary and Martha, the Syro-Phoenician woman, Nicodemus, the woman at the well and Andrew. We will be seeing what we can learn from how they got to know Jesus and whether they have anything to offer that might help us get to know Jesus better too. The Bible studies will be running on Wednesday evenings at the URC and Thursday mornings at the Roman Catholic church. If you can't get long to those, you might want to consider the Church of England's Lent resources for this year, called "Watch and Pray". There is a book offering daily reflections for every day in Lent, or you can sign up to have these sent to you by email or via an app on your phone. There is a version for children too. You can find all the details on the Church of England's website ([Watch and Pray - Resources for Lent 2024 | The Church of England](https://www.churchofengland.org.uk/watch-and-pray-resources-for-lent-2024)).

What could you do to get to know Jesus, the Word of God, better this Lent?
Christian faith is not just knowing about Jesus, but knowing Jesus, allowing Jesus to speak into our lives, shine his light into our lives and change us for the better.