



# WAITING IN THE **WILDERNESS**

**LENT 2025**

[waitinginthewilderness.com](http://waitinginthewilderness.com)

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# INTRODUCTION

WAITING IN THE WILDERNESS IS THE FIFTH LENT COURSE PRODUCED BY THE CLEWER INITIATIVE. EVERY YEAR, WE HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED TO HEAR OF GROUPS, GATHERING DURING LENT TO REFLECT AND PRAY, AND LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW BEST TO RESPOND TO MODERN SLAVERY.

WE HOPE THIS SIX-WEEK COURSE, BASED ON LUKE 13, WILL NOURISH YOUR CHRISTIAN FAITH AND STRENGTHEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF MODERN SLAVERY IN THE UK.

## WHY “WAITING IN THE WILDERNESS”?

Life is very much a “wilderness” experience for a victim of modern slavery – bleak, lonely, never-ending and without hope. Interestingly, the wilderness in the Bible is both the place where God’s people meet Him in a special way and where they face extreme suffering, solitude and temptation.

In Genesis 16, Hagar, a victim of exploitation and domestic servitude, flees into the desert where an angel of the Lord ministers to her. He assures her that the LORD “hears her misery” and Hagar responds by calling the LORD “the One who sees me”. This verse provided the inspiration for The Clewer Initiative’s strapline “We See You” and our hope is that, through everything we do, we would see victims more clearly and through our life and actions, share the tender and faithful love of God.



## LEARNING FROM LUKE

This year’s Lent course focuses on chapter 13 of Luke’s Gospel – a section of Scripture that features in some of the Church of England’s Sunday Lent readings. In this section of Luke, Jesus is “resolutely set on Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51) and facing opposition from the Samaritans, Pharisees and teachers of the law. He begins teaching about the nature of the kingdom of God but he is on a collision course with the Pharisees, exposing their hypocrisy (11:37-54) and warning his disciples to be wary of their influence. Jesus urges his disciples to not worry but seek His kingdom and be ready for when the Son of Man returns (12:22-48). He urges the crowd who are following him to realise the times they are living in and be ready for judgement day (12:49-59).

It is against this backdrop that we reach chapter 13 where Jesus shares the memorable parables of the fig-tree, mustard seed and yeast and heals a woman who has been crippled for 18 years. The chapter includes famous verses such as “make every effort to enter through the narrow door,” “those who are last will be first” and “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.”

Our section in Luke’s Gospel reminds us about the surprising nature of God’s kingdom and the urgency of making “every effort to enter through the narrow door.”

## AN OVERVIEW

Each session consists of the following elements:



## LEADING A GROUP

If you are leading a group, we would encourage you to review the material before each session begins so you feel confident about the focus.

When you gather, you could work through the following steps:

- Open in prayer
- Take turns to read each section of the session.
- It could be useful to pause for a time of contemplation or reflection, and allow space for exploration, imagination, and prayerfulness.
- Feel free to adapt the material to your context and bring your own expertise and stories to the sessions – you may want to consider if there is anyone in your community you could invite to be a part of the group to bring their frontline expertise to the table. For example, a local schoolteacher, police officer, social worker or charity worker.
- Close in prayer

## ABOUT THE CLEWER INITIATIVE

The Clewer Initiative was established in 2016 as part of the national work of the Church of England to combat modern slavery. In 2024, it became an independent charity with three aims:

- to raise awareness of modern slavery and exploitation
- to encourage churches and communities to take action against modern slavery
- to promote victim identification, care and support.

Based on our belief that the tools to tackle modern slavery lie within communities, we work with local churches to build resilience and support vulnerable groups, developing resources that help raise awareness and produce practical outcomes.

We also work at a national and international level through a range of partnerships and collaborations to enable the development of appropriate policies and legal frameworks for businesses and governments.

## CARING FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS

Modern slavery is a form of abuse. Before you run the group check what safeguarding training is available for you so that you understand how to recognise, respond, record and refer concerns. Talk with the safeguarding lead for your church about the right training for you. The Church of England offers free e-learning which can be accessed [here](#).

Be aware that people may be upset by the course material and may also share experiences about themselves or others. Advise the group before you start that you will be following the safeguarding practices for your organisation. If someone needs support or discloses information that they or someone else is at risk from harm, please speak immediately to your safeguarding lead. You can also speak to your local authority/ police and/or the Modern Slavery Helpline.



# SIX ANIMATED POEMS

EACH WEEK, WE HAVE WRITTEN A POEM TELLING THE STORY OF A VICTIM OF MODERN SLAVERY OR BYSTANDER.

PLEASE WATCH THE ANIMATED POEM ON OUR MICROSITE AND USE THE QUESTIONS TO REFLECT FURTHER.

## DOES GOD HEAR ANYMORE?

WEEK 1



## TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

WEEK 2



## BEING WASHED AWAY

WEEK 3



## FINDING MY WAY

WEEK 4



## A COG IN THE WHEEL

WEEK 5



## UNCARING CARING

WEEK 6





## MODERN SLAVERY IN THE UK

Modern slavery is a term that covers any form of human trafficking, slavery, servitude or forced labour, as set out in the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Potential victims of modern slavery in the UK who come to the attention of authorised first responder organisations are referred to the Home Office's National Referral Mechanism.

From July to September 2024, 4,758 potential victims of modern slavery were referred to the Home Office, representing a 10% increase compared to the previous quarter and the highest since the NRM began in 2009. The most common nationalities referred during the quarter were UK (23%), Albanian (11%) and Vietnamese (11%). 42% of potential victims claimed they were exploited exclusively in the UK.

For the full year of 2023, the NRM received 17,004 referrals. The real number of modern slavery victims in the UK is probably many times higher as many people never come forward to the authorities. The Global Slavery Index suggests there are approximately 122,000 victims living in slavery in the UK but even this could be a conservative estimate. Modern slavery is present in many of our communities.

## WHAT IS LIFE LIKE FOR VICTIMS OF MODERN SLAVERY?

Exploitation can take many forms – sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, domestic servitude and exploitation in criminal activity, such as county lines drug supply, shoplifting and cannabis cultivation.

Victims are forced, coerced or deceived into exploitation, becoming trapped in a situation they cannot escape. Exploiters may be part of a large criminal organisation, a smaller operation or lone offenders. Usually they are highly organised and adept at disguising their activities.

Victims are men, women and children of all ages, ethnicities and nationalities. Unseen or overlooked, they continue to live miserable lives with no freedom or dignity.

Our Lent course includes six animated poems which tell the story of different victims of modern slavery. We hope these poems will deepen your understanding of how individuals get drawn into modern slavery and how it can feel to be trapped and exploited.



## WAIT AND CONTEMPLATE

### READ LUKE 13V1-5

Jesus uses two stories of suffering to highlight everyone's need to repent. As CS Lewis explains in his book *The Problem of Pain*, suffering shows us that all is not well with the world and that the world is under judgement and we need to repent. CS Lewis says: "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." When we hear a victim's testimony of dreadful suffering at the hands of a criminal gang or are shocked by the scale of modern slavery across the world, instead of railing against God or judging others, we should see it as a wake-up call or reminder to turn back to Him ourselves.

On the surface, in our own lives, all may seem well, but Jesus is clear that each of us needs to look more closely at ourselves, and our context and repent. To repent is to recognise our shortcomings, and resolve to seek a new direction for our lives.

Importantly, Jesus stresses that acute suffering is not a sign that someone is a worse sinner. It can be easy to judge people whose lives are messy and chaotic. Jesus is challenging this wrong thinking and bringing the focus closer to home.



## QUESTIONS

- How can we cultivate compassion towards people who are suffering rather than judgement?
- How do you understand Jesus' call to repent?



## SPOTLIGHT ON DOMESTIC SERVITUDE

Domestic servitude is a form of modern slavery which is extremely difficult to detect because it takes place in homes, unseen by many. The victim is usually expected to work 24/7 and is unable to leave the home of their own free will.

Domestic workers perform a range of tasks including cooking, cleaning, laundry, taking care of children and elderly people, and running errands.

When a domestic worker has been recruited from another country, domestic servitude can also encompass debt-bondage. Beginning with debt incurred for their travel or work placement, the "employer" or recruiter constantly adds additional fees (such as for food and accommodation) to the debt so that it keeps growing and can never be paid.

## SIGNS OF DOMESTIC SERVITUDE



### DO THEY WORK VERY LONG HOURS?

Or seem to be on call at all hours



### CAN THEY FREELY CONTACT FRIENDS OR FAMILY?



### DO THEY EVER LEAVE THE HOUSE ON THEIR OWN?



### DO THEY SEEM AFRAID OR ANXIOUS?



### HAVE THEIR PASSPORTS OR DOCUMENTS BEEN TAKEN?



### WHAT CONDITIONS ARE THEY LIVING IN?



### DO THEY STAND OUT FROM OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS?



## WATCH: DOES GOD HEAR ANYMORE?

*When is a home not a home?*

*When it is a prison.*

*When is a job not a job?*

*When it is exploitation.*

*Behind the curtains of many homes  
are people like me, denied even phones.*

*Washing, cleaning, cooking and more  
with no proper pay, made to sleep on the floor.*

*"Employers" think they are doing me a favour,  
a place of safety and permanent labour.*

*They judge me by my work, not as myself  
a household implement- a new kind of wealth.*

*My work helps the family be happy and free.  
No one knows how their freedom scars me.  
I'm too scared to complain, where could I go?  
No one to help- who do I know?*

*Yet I too would really love to be free,  
for others to care about my dignity.  
I always thought that God hears the  
cries of the poor*

*the Big Question is: Does God hear anymore?*



## ACTION

- Write some prayers for use in your church, interceding for victims of modern slavery.
- Email a copy of your prayers to The Clewer Initiative so that it can be a resource for others - [info@clewer.org.uk](mailto:info@clewer.org.uk)



## PRAYER

*Gracious Father, help each of us to hear  
the cries of those who are oppressed.  
Please forgive us for our self-concern.  
May our lives and action be a witness to  
your presence and healing power.*

*In Jesus' name, we pray.*

*Amen.*



## PONDER THE POEM

1. Before today, were you aware of domestic servitude as a form of modern slavery?
2. What kind of witness can we make through the church about the importance of the home – as a place to nourish goodness and grace?
3. How can we demonstrate that God does “hear the cry of the poor”?



## WAIT AND CONTEMPLATE

### READ LUKE 13V6-9

Jesus wants his hearers to understand the “times” they are living in. God is like a vineyard owner, looking for good fruit. Too often our preoccupation with ourselves, and our own small agendas, prevents us concentrating on the kind of fruit the Lord seeks: repentant hearts and transformed lives.

There is an urgency to Jesus’ teaching. God, like the man, has waited patiently and taken care of the vineyard but in the end, He will return in judgement. He gives another chance – there is always the possibility of forgiveness and new life – but God’s people must show the fruit of repentance.



## QUESTIONS

- How do you feel as you read this parable?
- What is Jesus saying to you today?



## SPOTLIGHT ON FORCED LABOUR

The [ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930](#) (No. 29), defines forced labour as “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily”.

The ILO identifies eleven indicators of forced labour: abuse of vulnerability, deception, restriction of movement, isolation, physical and sexual violence, intimidation and threats, retention of identity documents, withholding of wages, debt bondage, abusive working and living conditions, and excessive overtime. The ILO highlights that “the presence of a single indicator in a given situation may in some cases imply the existence of forced labour. However, in other cases, you may need to look for several indicators which, taken together, point to a forced labour case.”

A [recent report](#) from the Centre for Social Justice found that “forced or compulsory labour happens in the UK regular economy with criminals infiltrating or camouflaging themselves as legitimate businesses, with the highest risk in social care, hand car washes, agriculture, construction and hospitality sectors.”

Another form of forced labour is forced criminal activity such as forced begging, forced theft, forced work on cannabis farms, and financial abuse and fraud.





## WATCH: TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

*What a bargain! Cheaper than cheap.  
I just had to have it.  
Something I had always wanted.  
  
A treasure to make my life better  
to give me confidence and style.  
To impress strangers and friends alike.  
  
Such a precious item! But does it  
have another story?  
Ask the maker, ask the seller.  
How are the workers treated?  
Cheap for you maybe – but what is the  
cost to others?  
Can you live with that?  
  
What about an email? Its a small thing  
but powerful when sent to businesses  
and pressure groups,  
collecting their stories.  
Together we can ask 'who' was involved  
and on what terms?  
  
The voiceless need a voice,  
The silent, trapped and tortured cries  
"in as much as you did it to one of these,  
you did it to me."  
Are you listening?  
  
Compassion isn't just a feeling.  
Its organisation, its time and money,  
its wisdom and focus.  
It's discipleship.*



## ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

Eradicating labour exploitation in global supply chains requires a united effort from corporates, governments, and individuals. In the UK, the Modern Slavery Act means that every company with a turnover of more than £36m is required to have a Modern Slavery statement where they outline how they are seeking to address slavery in their supply chains. Consumers have real power to challenge brands and ask them where they make their products, how they source their food, and what steps they're taking to avoid slavery. Use your voice!



## ACTION

- What does your church do to check its own procurement and supply chains?
- Write a letter to a company that has sold you a real bargain, asking for details of their modern slavery policy.



## PRAYER

*Holy God, teach us to be wise in how we invest the resources you have given us. Make us aware of the needs of those hidden and trapped who often play a key part in providing the goods and services we enjoy. May we learn to produce the fruit you desire – justice, mercy, and peace. For Christ's sake.*

*Amen.*



## PONDER THE POEM

- Goods and services all have stories – consider a cup of tea. What might be the story of the tea leaves and those who have produced them?
- What can we do to "dig more deeply" into the criminality of supply chains that abuse so many of our sisters and brothers?
- Many companies have a modern slavery statement to show how they are working to keep slavery out of the supply chain. Look at an example and discuss the details.



## WAIT AND CONTEMPLATE

### READ LUKE 13V10-17

Systems order and dominate our lives. In this story, the crippled woman had to endure the place she was given in the system – a cripple – expected to live within severe limitations. That was her lot.

Even the religion of the day endorsed the systems and distinctions. The synagogue spirituality may have occasionally prayed for those who suffer, but there was no momentum to change the systems – to see and treat her in a different way. In fact, the reverse. At least with systems, everyone knows who they are and where they are. Religious groups tend to like this kind of security.

Jesus comes along and turns everything upside down. He is a disruptor! He frees the woman from her infirmity and immediately she is healed. The religious leaders respond with indignance. Jesus has broken their man-made laws and he exposes their callous hypocrisy. Their behaviour and reaction to Jesus is an example of the “bad fruit” of Luke 13:7.

But theirs is not the only reaction described in the passage. “The people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.” Jesus is like marmite! He divides opinions – some love him, some hate him and this is usually a sign of whether people are willing to accept new life and new ways or simply want to cling to established systems.

What’s more, by healing the woman on the Sabbath, Jesus shows us once again what sort of King he is and the sort of kingdom he is bringing in.

## QUESTION

- What rules and restrictions do you cling to that might stop you doing the work of the kingdom?
- Have you appreciated the radical, disruptor nature of Jesus? Where else in the Gospels have you seen him challenging the status quo, doing the unexpected and clashing with the religious leaders?
- Do you see this “Marmite-like” response to Jesus in your community or society?



## SPOTLIGHT ON EXPLOITATION IN HAND CAR WASHES

Many hand car washes are legitimate businesses, but some exploit their workers. According to the [Gangmasters & Labour Abuse Authority \(GLA\)](#) victims are usually male, between the ages of 18-35 years and often targeted because of other vulnerabilities such as being unable to communicate in English. Romanian nationals are most frequently reported, followed by Albanian and Bulgarian nationals.

Some hand car washes are believed to have links to organised crime including drugs and human trafficking. It is common practice for exploiters to provide accommodation, usually a shared house or to force workers to reside at the car wash site itself. Accommodation is often reported to be substandard or overcrowded.

Victims are unlikely to be paid the National Minimum Wage and may work excessive hours or have their wages withheld. Other warning signs are a lack of PPE, intimidating managers, under-age workers and an insistence on cash only.



DOWNLOAD THE APP  
Safe Car Wash

WE SEE YOU.  
THE CLEWER INITIATIVE



## WATCH: BEING WASHED AWAY

*The car was filthy, it needed a clean.  
Here was I to polish and sheen  
and the price is the lowest it's ever been.*

*The chemicals in the wash are ruining  
my trainers  
in fact lack of proper protection is  
a real explainer  
but people don't notice or feel my restrainers.*

*They get out their phones and I hear  
their "Hi's."*

*No chance of seeing the pain in my eyes.  
They want voices that flatter, not  
heartbreaking sighs.*

*What can I do to escape from this place?  
Who can reach out and offer me grace?  
How can I connect face to face?*

*I wield the power to make shiny and new.  
They have the power to make me that too,  
but the car moves on - so does the rot  
in my shoe.*

The Clewer Initiative has developed a groundbreaking app to help identify and report exploitation in the hand car wash sector. The Safe Car Wash App asks a series of questions related to the indicators of modern slavery and then assesses the answers. If there is a high likelihood that modern slavery is occurring at the hand car wash, users are invited to send a report to the Modern Slavery Helpline at the touch of a button. All reports submitted through the app are also sent to a back-end data website, where they are made available to police officers and data analysts.

Since the launch of the Safe Car Wash App in June 2018, it has been downloaded 40,000 times and has generated 9,000 reports, with many reports being referred to Modern Slavery Helpline and law enforcement every month. This intelligence has been crucial in building a clear picture of the hand car wash sector around the country and has enabled law enforcement agencies to follow-up on numerous businesses that may be exploiting their workers.

Join us in our efforts to eradicate exploitation in hand car washes:

- Download the Safe Car Wash App and discuss how it works
- Tell five friends about the Safe Car Wash App



## PONDER THE POEM

- Did you know that modern slavery and exploitation can exist in hand car wash businesses?
- Are you aware of where your nearest hand car wash is?
- What are some of the warning signs of exploitation you could look out for?



## ACTION

Those enslaved in car washes stand in a similar space to the woman in Luke 13 - part of a system that helps clean the cars of those rich enough to afford them. These workers are expected to look scruffy, marginal, be seen with a passing glance. That is how the system works. Our calling, however, is to disrupt this exploitation and bring freedom and hope.



## PRAYER

*Almighty God, may your Holy word cleanse us of all self-centredness, so that we can learn how to go beyond the systems and structures we so easily take for granted. Help us recognise those needing a better share of the freedom and new life you long to enable for all your children. In your mercy, hear us.*

*Amen.*



## WAIT AND CONTEMPLATE

### READ LUKE 13V18-22

Jesus continues to teach about the topsy turvy kingdom of God. While it may look small and inconsequential, it will grow exponentially like a mustard seed into a tree or yeast in dough. Like yeast, the growth of Jesus' kingdom will be hidden and unseen. This is an encouragement and helpful reminder when the church can seem in decline or our efforts small and seemingly ineffective.



## QUESTIONS

- How do these parables help with our expectation management in terms of the growth of the kingdom?
- How can this parable encourage us to not “despise the day of small things” (Zechariah 4:10) or feel disheartened by small ministries?



## SPOTLIGHT ON COUNTY LINES

County lines involves the supply of illegal drugs using dedicated mobile phones, known as deal lines, to take orders. According to the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), in 2024, there were 1,447 Organised Crime Groups linked to County Lines and their drug activity predominantly focused on crack cocaine and heroin supply.

Criminal gangs frequently target and groom children and vulnerable adults - manipulating and coercing them into drug trafficking and distribution. County lines can also involve cuckooing, where dealers take over a local property, usually belonging to a vulnerable person, to use as a base for their criminal activity.

Often, a gang member will befriend a young person, buying them gifts such as branded clothing and trainers, mobile phones and food. They will spend a lot of time making them feel special and the young person will gradually be drawn into their lifestyle and trained up to transport and distribute drugs.

Physical and mental abuse is common, along with threats of violence or death to their family members if they try to leave the gang. Despite this, child victims may not even realise they are being exploited. They may believe that the members of the gang are their friends and that they are being looked after.

Criminals may use social media platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok to connect with potential victims.





## WATCH: FINDING MY WAY

*Parents can be such a drag.*

*Dad's never there, Mums just a nag.*

*Much more fun to find mates who are cool.*

*A new kind of family, out of school*

*At first it felt good – all was calm.*

*The chance for fun, freedom, no harm.*

*But as I found my place in the gang  
there were jobs to be done, a special slang.*

*Drugs were the key - for others, not me.*

*I needed to deliver them so no one could see.*

*This helped my mates thrive and succeed  
making a pot from others in need.*

*The more I passed on, the better it got.*

*Growing business through substances*

*I know not what.*

*But the commands got tougher, asking a lot,  
and no one could help me ask whether  
to carry on or not.*

*Being a teen can be lonely and unsure.*

*We need help to check out each open door.*

*But where can we find mates to  
listen and care?*

*The deeper you're in, the harder to share.*



## ACTION

Growing up has always created challenges. From Romeo and Juliet to our own experiences of adolescence, each of us could give examples and tell stories. The challenge of County Lines is not to be met by some massive scheme for controlling or policing the growing up of young people. That is a complex and sophisticated task – as parents recognise. In Jesus' teaching in Luke he is clear that even a little can be enough in encouraging the proper growth of kingdom values and kingdom behaviours. Here is an important clue about how to try to contribute creatively to the challenges young people face in their journeys towards adulthood.

- Young people need to find and explore their own identity in safe spaces – how can the church or individuals help facilitate this?
- How could you encourage young people and adults in your community to grow together?
- What role can the church play in raising awareness of county lines?



## PRAYER

*Our Father, whose kingdom comes  
through our learning to accept your  
grace and goodness, help us recognise the  
struggles of all who are faced with trying  
to discern new ways and opportunities.  
Enable us to reach out with love to those  
whose journeys seem challenging and  
difficult, so that together we may face  
temptation, resist evil and share the daily  
bread of forgiveness and hope that can  
make us one in you. Thy will be done*

*Amen.*



## PONDER THE POEM

1. What was your “growing up” experience like?
2. How does it differ from teenagers you know today?
3. From your own experience, what support, guidance, and encouragement could you offer to those finding their way into the world of adult values and behaviours?



## WAIT AND CONTEMPLATE

### READ LUKE 13V22-30

The crowd notices the opposition that Jesus is facing from the religious leaders (who they would have expected to embrace the Messiah) and it prompts someone to ask “are only a few people going to be saved?” Jesus answers emphatically – “make every effort to enter through the narrow door.”

In some ways, there is a narrowness and exclusivity to God’s kingdom – many who thought they would be “fine” in the eyes of God are found wanting and judged.

But in other ways, there is breadth to the kingdom: “People will come from east and west and north and south and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

There will also be a great reversal – “indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”



## QUESTIONS

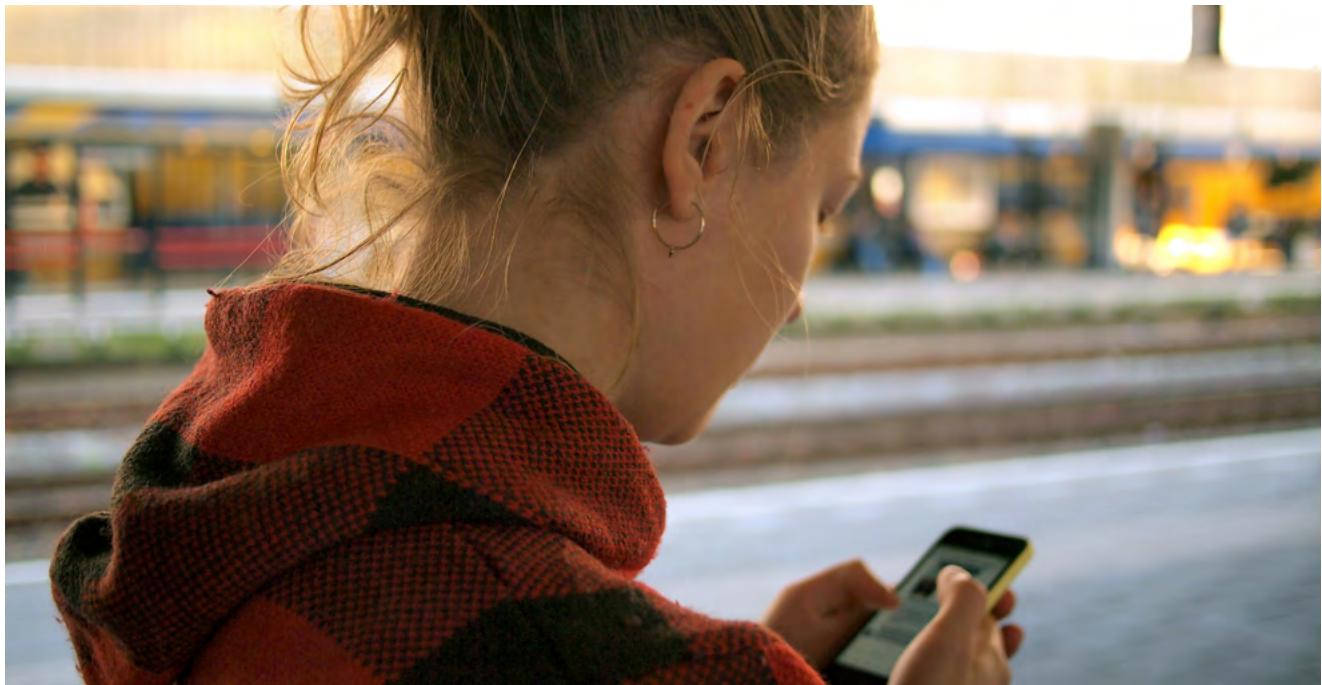
- Do these verses surprise, comfort or unsettle you?
- Who do you think Jesus is particularly trying to warn?
- What are the encouragements in the passage?



## SPOTLIGHT ON SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Sexual exploitation is where adults or children are forced, by threats, bribes, coercion or deception, to perform sexual services or acts. Perpetrators usually hold power over their victims, due to age, gender, sexual identity, physical strength or status. It is important to understand the difference between an adult choosing freely to engage in sex work and an adult who takes part in sexual activity as a result of being exploited.

Sexual exploitation may occur in brothels, hotels, short-term lets or through on-street sex work. Anybody can be a victim of sexual exploitation - while it mainly affects women, men can also be victims. Men, women and children can be trafficked into or within the UK for sexual exploitation.





## WATCH: A COG IN THE WHEEL: GENEVIEVE'S STORY

*I did not know that love,  
trusting someone totally,  
could be a call to death.*

*He promised me so much -  
hope, purpose and proper work,  
my heart began to sing.*

*And then the moment of betrayal.  
No job, no hope, no love.  
Just a command to do his will.*

*The call came from others,  
greedy, selfish, no concern for me.  
I was just a cog in a fantasy wheel.*

*There I was, trapped, hurting -  
my heart crying for help,  
my body abused again and again.*

*Why someone on the inside should notice  
I will never understand  
but they did, and helped me to run...*

*Into the arms of the Law, the State,  
the Church.  
Arms that gave protection, comfort.  
Perhaps there can be something more?*



## ACTION

- In all her pain and struggle, Genevieve suggests “perhaps there can be something more?” Are there any local organisations seeking to support victims and survivors of sexual exploitation that you could support?
  - What sort of volunteer help do they currently need?
  - Could you raise awareness of these volunteer opportunities within your church?



## PRAYER

*God of love, inspire us to make our witness to the precious gift of relationships and the way you have taught us to preserve and treasure these blessings. Help us play our part in challenging the self-centredness and indifference which allows so much sexual exploitation to take place in our societies. May your love grow commitment, creative connections, and continual blessing. Help us to nourish relationships through which your children can enter your kingdom and fulfil your will for our flourishing.*

*In trust and hope we pray,*

*Amen.*



## PONDER THE POEM

- What issues do we need to consider about an ‘established’ way of living that allows this kind of sexual exploitation to take place?
- “The Law, The State, The Church” are not simply systems of establishment to keep everything well-ordered for human societies and for divine purposes. The law, the state and the church exist especially to serve those who need justice, support, and blessings. How can churches make a more appropriate contribution to the challenges we face around sexual values and practices?
- Silence. Take five minutes to ask God for guidance and grace in considering Genevieve’s story





## WAIT AND CONTEMPLATE

### READ LUKE 13V31-35

As our Lent course comes to an end and we reach the final passage in Luke 13, we are struck by Jesus' words. The Pharisees want Jesus to leave and Herod wants to kill him. Jesus responds with determination. He knows his destiny – he is a prophet who must die in Jerusalem.

While Jesus comes across as strong and resolute in the face of opposition, he also shows sorrow, tenderness and compassion when thinking of the many people who reject him. He says: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing." This is an amazing insight into the heart of our merciful saviour. He embodies both compassion and righteous anger. His godly response is an example for us to follow when we encounter suffering and sin in the world



## QUESTIONS

- What different reactions to Jesus do we see in this passage?
- How does Jesus respond to antagonism?
- What strikes you about Jesus' words about gathering "her chicks under her wings"? What would this look like for us today?
- How do these verses help you appreciate Jesus more as we enter Holy Week?



## SPOTLIGHT ON MODERN SLAVERY IN CARE SECTOR

Modern slavery is growing in the UK care sector. This is because the vast number of vacancies in the care sector has led to unscrupulous employment agencies recruiting thousands of vulnerable workers from overseas and charging them extortionate fees to find work and secure a visa. Workers are in huge debt before they even arrive in the UK and this forces them to accept all sorts of work and circumstances. Carers work for little or no pay or work for days on end without a day off and live under the constant threat of their visa being cancelled. There has been a surge of people presenting at churches, explaining their desperate situation and asking for help.

While it is a demanding sector to work in and many employees may be tired and juggling lots of demands, there are some indicators that should not be tolerated. If you see the following signs, please contact the GLAA or Modern Slavery Helpline. They will be able to investigate further and identify whether workers are being exploited.





## SPOTLIGHT ON MODERN SLAVERY IN CARE SECTOR



CARER IS LIKELY TO BE FROM INDIA OR AN AFRICAN NATION AND NEWLY WORKING IN THE UK

NOT BEING PAID FOR TRAVEL BETWEEN APPOINT



WALKING LONG DISTANCES BETWEEN APPOINTMENTS - NO APPARENT MEANS OF TRANSPORT TO MOVE BETWEEN CLIENTS



NOT KEEN TO ENGAGE IN CONVERSATION

LOOKING DESTITUTE



RESTRICTED MOVEMENT INCLUDING NOT BEING ALLOWED TO ATTEND CHURCH OR OTHER PLACE OF WORSHIP



WORKING CONTINUALLY WITHOUT LUNCH BREAKS OR DAYS OFF



BEING PAID UNDER THE MINIMUM WAGE OR NOT AT ALL



POOR ACCOMMODATION



WORKERS NOT BEING TRAINED PROPERLY

APPEARS FEARFUL OR UNHAPPY



APPEARS TIRED OR IN POOR HEALTH



CARE COMPANY PROVIDES TRANSPORT AND A DRIVER



## WATCH: UNCARING CARING

*People who live longer or need help to survive want care which is special- to keep them alive.*

*Care homes are expanding, and offer it all, bed, board and bonding, whatever the call.*

*Yet of those recruited to provide special care many are vulnerable, desperate for their own share.*

*The work comes through agencies and expert providers: the key is the cost, fewer more human guiders.*

*Yet if we go visit, to add to the care we might notice staff on the verge of despair. We think it is stress from working so hard. We never imagine this hidden undercard.*

*Someone is needed to go an extra mile to help those who visit take more than a smile.*

*What can you do - both in word and deed to help care be a blessing to all who have need?*

*How does goodness become such a lie? How can oppression be such a sharp tie? What might we do to ensure that we stop all this uncaring caring, and put justice on top?*



## PONDER THE POEM

1. Did you know that there is an increasing amount of exploitation in the UK care sector? Why do you think this is?
2. Discuss your own experiences of care homes and visiting the vulnerable
3. What is an employer's duty of care?
4. Listen to [Terri's Story](#) - what strikes you about her words?
5. How can you and your church better identify and train people to visit care homes and care for residents and staff together?



## ACTION

- Talk to your parish safeguarding officer about modern slavery in the care sector and whether they could provide additional training / guidelines for those who visit people in care homes.



## PRAYER

*Lord of all Life, we ask for courage to look beyond the way in which we organise care, so that there may be a proper concern for all involved, including the carers themselves. May we step out with confidence to visit and offer your grace and find ways of getting close to those so easily overlooked and isolated amidst the pressures of daily living. Let your love be focused through our discipleship so that all whom we meet can say – “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord”.*

*Amen.*

# CONCLUSION

BY BISHOP ALASTAIR REDFERN

AS WE COME TO THE END OF THIS LENT COURSE, WE GIVE THANKS TO GOD FOR THE FREEDOMS AND OPPORTUNITIES WE ENJOY AND SEEK GUIDANCE AS TO HOW WE USE THESE GIFTS IN THE SERVICE OF THE KINGDOM.

Please let The Clewer Initiative know of any particular responses you might choose to make through your local church and communities, so that we can be aware of patterns of emerging witness and encourage others to consider similar possibilities. Please email us at [info@clewer.org.uk](mailto:info@clewer.org.uk) with your ideas.



## WAITING IN THE WILDERNESS

