**Monday 6th July**

Psalm 84: 5-7

Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
    whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.
**6**As they pass through the Valley of Baka,
    they make it a place of springs;
    the autumn rains also cover it with pools.
**7**They go from strength to strength,
    till each appears before God in Zion.

As lockdown is easing this week, people are beginning to travel a little more. Holidays are becoming a possibility and longer journeys permissible. Our passage this morning talks about pilgrimage which is a special kind of journey. Some people undertake literal pilgrimages to places of spiritual significance, but as Christians our whole lives can be seen as pilgrimage. The idea of pilgrimage is that you set aside time and resources to seek the Lord, to go deeper with Him. He is the goal. But all Christian pilgrims go through the Valley of Baka from time to time. It is thought that the Valley of Baka was a real place, on the outskirts of Jerusalem. But it also means the Valley of tears or weeping, and speaks to places of pain we pass through. So these verses are full of redemption. As we pass through trials, by keeping our eyes on the goal, on Jesus, He is able to take times of trouble and bring life and blessing from them (‘pools’ in this context can be translated as ‘blessing’). Those difficult seasons can strengthen us was we walk the pilgrims way, never losing sight of the fact that one day we will see our Saviour face-to-face.

*Father, we pray for ourselves and our Christian family today, wherever we are on our pilgrimage. We pray that we would know your Presence as we walk this journey, and that you would help us to stay resolute as we learn more of your love and grow it the likeness of Jesus. Help us to trust you, even in the Valley of tears. We pray for any today who are grieving and sorrowful. Comfort them with your love. Help them not to lose heart. Show us how we can encourage and restore hope. In Jesus Name. Amen.*

