

# *Crowland Abbey*

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PRIEST IN CHARGE**

Recently, the words of a song by Thomas Morley came into my mind – April is in my mistress' face. Ahh! I thought. How romantic. Then I looked up the words... April is in my mistress' face, And July in her eyes hath place. Within her bosom is September, But in her heart, a cold December.

Well, that escalated quickly!

It started so well. April, with its hints of sun shining, full of life and promise, newly blossoming beauty; July in the full dazzling brightness of a summer sun, warmth and joyfulness. And September... what's happening here? A sense that something is fading, but perhaps lingering – a last little burst of an 'Indian Summer'... And then... December. The icy heart, a frozen personality. All our words are negative – icy, frigid...

It reminded me of the CS Lewis story of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. The land of Narnia is ruled by the White Witch, who has turned the whole country into a winter-land. It is described as being always winter, but never Christmas. Any warmth or life has been leached from the world, and there is no hope in the darkness. Into this land come Peter, Edmund, Susan & Lucy, who are the harbingers of the arrival of Aslan – the one who came to die in the place of the one condemned, but who subsequently bursts through the chains of death, and brings life to those who have been turned to stone, and freedom for his people. Sounds familiar somehow! As we approach Holy Week, we walk the journey with Jesus, and experience the total desolation of Good Friday – betrayal, torture, abandonment, and death. We spend a day in the coldness and emptiness of the grave. And this is important, because this is the lived experience of millions round the world... thousands in this country... perhaps even our loved ones, our family or our friends.

But that is not the end. The cold and darkness of death cannot hold him. The grave bursts open, and... He is not there. The table cracks, and Susan and Lucy cannot at first see the lion Aslan. Until, suddenly, he is there, and joy and wonder fill their souls. December turns back, through September, right back to April – the hope and promise of New Life, life in all its fulness.

Revd Mark Williams