

Questions to accompany Malcolm Guite's Sermon on the Early Church's understanding of Scripture (7 March 2021)

- 1) How clearly do you recognise the two 'modern' approaches to reading Scripture which are outlined in the sermon's first paragraph? Where have you come across them, and in what ways have they been helpful to you, or difficult to accept? Does it surprise you to see them both described as 'modern'?
- 2) Does it make sense to you to say that the Bible is '*a single, sacred, luminous text, centred on Jesus,*'? Do ideas such as allegory and typology make sense as a way of linking Old and New Testaments, or do they just seem far-fetched examples of people making things up for themselves?
- 3) It has been said that all Christians, consciously or unconsciously, read the Scriptures with an interpretative key, (sometimes called 'a canon within the canon', where the word canon means 'a measuring stick'). So, for example, some people may see the picture of Jesus and his teachings in the Gospels as the measuring stick which helps us to evaluate other bits of the Scriptures, while other people may see the idea of 'justification by faith' as expounded by St Paul, as the key idea which interprets everything else. What do you think, is the 'key idea' or measuring stick which helps make sense of what the whole Bible is really about, and which bit of the Bible is most precious to you?
- 4) Do you think St Augustine was right to say that it didn't matter if someone's particular interpretation of a passage strays from the author's original meaning, so long as the key idea he or she finds there is true to Scripture's overall message of love?
- 5) Do you feel liberated, or confused, by learning about how the early church understood Scripture?