



## First Sunday of Lent

Today we hear how Jesus is driven out into the wilderness and tempted by Satan. Let us lift up our souls, our hearts and our minds to worship God who with steadfast love and compassion holds us, understands our needs and guides us in the ways of righteousness and faithfulness.

The Lord be with you  
**and also with you**

**Hymn:** From Heaven you came helpless babe

From heaven you came helpless babe  
Entered our world, your glory veiled  
Not to be served but to serve  
And give Your life that we might live  
*This is our God, The Servant King*  
*He calls us now to follow Him*  
*To bring our lives as a daily offering*  
*Of worship to The Servant King*

There in the garden of tears  
My heavy load he chose to bear  
His heart with sorrow was torn  
'Yet not My will but Yours,' He said  
*This is our God, The Servant King*  
*He calls us now to follow Him*  
*To bring our lives as a daily offering*  
*Of worship to The Servant King*

Come see His hands and His feet  
The scars that speak of sacrifice  
Hands that flung stars into space  
To cruel nails surrendered  
*This is our God, The Servant King*  
*He calls us now to follow Him*  
*To bring our lives as a daily offering*  
*Of worship to The Servant King*

So let us learn how to serve  
And in our lives enthrone Him  
Each other's needs to prefer  
For it is Christ we're serving  
*This is our God, The Servant King*  
*He calls us now to follow Him*  
*To bring our lives as a daily offering*  
*Of worship to The Servant King*  
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**Confession:**

Let us put our trust in God whose faithfulness, love and compassion are everlasting. He will forgive us for all we have done wrong if we are honest with him and confess our weaknesses and failures.

When tempting distractions keep us from walking in the footsteps of Jesus,  
**Lord, have mercy.**

When selfish pride and angry thoughts keep us from humbly serving others as Jesus serves us,  
**Christ, have mercy.**

When we close our hearts and minds and refuse to listen to the voice of Jesus, God's beloved Son,  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Almighty God,  
who forgives all who truly repent,  
have mercy upon us,  
pardon and deliver us from all our sins,  
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness,  
and keep us in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

**The Collect:**

Heavenly Father,  
your Son battled with the powers of darkness,  
and grew closer to you in the desert:  
help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer  
that we may witness to your saving love  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen**

**A Reading from the New Testament:** 1 Peter 3:18-22

18 For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, 19 in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, 20 who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days

of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. 21 And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

For the word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

**Gospel Reading:** Mark 1:9-15

<sup>9</sup> In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup> And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. <sup>11</sup> And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

<sup>12</sup> And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup> He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

<sup>14</sup> Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

This is the gospel of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God**

**Homily:**

As we enter the first few days of Lent, I wonder have we thus far taken any time out of our day for that time of quiet reflection and self-examination, that extra time of reading and prayer, a time that is so important to our spiritual well-being. In usual times my answer would have probably been a no, for I am a person that can rush headlong into the day tackling the daily list of tasks full on, very busy 'doing' for God and not 'being' with him. However, although there are still many tasks to be done each day my diary is not packed with one appointment after another. Any appointments that I do have are usually in the comfort of my study via ZOOM. Something I hadn't even heard of this time last year!

I have found time in my day for reflection and for extra reading, study and prayer, although, because of the type of person I am, I still have to be very disciplined. as I find this incredibly difficult to do. As some of you may be aware, I'm what is known in scriptural terms as a Martha and not a Mary. These names refer to the story of one of Jesus' visits to his good friends Martha and Mary, whilst Mary sits at Jesus' feet hanging on his every word, it is Martha who is busy in the kitchen preparing the food for their guest. Getting more and more narked by this Martha asks Jesus, 'Lord do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' Jesus answers her, but not in the way she was expecting, 'Martha, you are distracted by many things: there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.' (Luke 10:38-42) In other words what Jesus was saying here is that if we get things

in the right order, i.e. spending time in our Lord's presence, then everything else will fall into place, as the saying goes, 'We need to let go and let God', let God work within us.

I need to remind myself of this constantly and on this the first Sunday of Lent it is a good time for us all to take stock of ourselves if we have not already done so.

It is good to take time to self-evaluate, to look deep within ourselves, to see the good and the bad, to ask God's forgiveness and help. At our Ash Wednesday service there was a section called 'The Liturgy of Penitence' a time of self-examination and confession (do look back at Ash Wednesdays order of service, you will see it there). It is a good liturgy to pray daily throughout Lent as I believe it will help you to focus and bring you into a closer personal relationship with God as we prepare ourselves for the events of Holy Week and Easter.

In our New Testament reading this morning we hear Peter tell us that although our sin separates us from God we are saved from that separation by baptism into new life, made possible by Christ's willing sacrifice of his own life and his resurrection from the dead by the power of God.

Baptism that all important sacrament, a sacrament by which we are cleansed deep within, an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual thing, something that happens deep within us that we just cannot understand, a wonderful mystery, a mystery of a new life in Christ, of God meeting us where we are.

The reading from Mark's gospel tells us of Jesus' own baptism by John in the Jordan, part of an account we heard only six weeks ago when we celebrated 'The Baptism of Christ.' Today's account however takes us a little further into the story, we hear how the Holy Spirit who, at his baptism, descends on Jesus like a dove, now drives him out into a wilderness time of trial and temptation before he can begin his public ministry of proclaiming that the kingdom of God is near.

Now to any thinking person the baptism of Jesus can present a problem. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance and therefore by its very nature those who came to him were asking forgiveness for their sins and to be made whole. So then why, if Jesus was sinless, does he need to go through such a ceremony? For Jesus the baptism was for four things.

It was the moment of decision, the time for him to launch his public ministry. It was the moment of identification. Jesus did not need to repent from sin; but here was a movement of the people back to God; and with that Godward movement he was determined to identify himself. It was the moment of approval. Nobody lightly leaves their home and sets out on an unknown way. He must be sure he's right. Jesus had decided on his course of action, and now he was looking for the seal of the approval of God. Lastly it was the moment of equipment. At that time the Holy Spirit descended upon him. The dove is a symbol of gentleness, a sign of God's conquering love.

The difference between today's gospel reading and that which we heard when we celebrated 'The Baptism of Christ' is that we go on to hear that no sooner was the glory of the hour of Baptism over than there came the battle of the temptations and

it was the 'Spirit' who thrust Jesus into the wilderness for the testing time. The very spirit who came upon him at his Baptism now drove him out for his test.

Mark in his writings about Jesus in the wilderness is very economical with words, 'He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; the angels waited on him,' this is almost all we need to know, Jesus experienced struggles and testing.

This passage in its few words tells us of the stark contrast between Jesus' joy and his pain. The joy of his baptism and the pain of his testing. It is because of this that Jesus is able to come alongside us in our moments of joy and our moments of pain. He knows and understands.

So then let us use this season of Lent to reflect on our own spiritual journey in the knowledge that Jesus, even after being affirmed as God's son, had to face a tough personal struggle. He remained faithful to God and he remains faithful to us in our struggle, he knows and understands us. Amen

### **The Creed:**

**We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen  
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation he came  
down from heaven,  
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and  
the Virgin Mary and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under  
Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven and is seated  
at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the  
living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the**

**Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen**

**Intercessions:**

Blessed are you Lord God, Creator of the universe. You have given us this world to enjoy and so that we may work in harmony with you. You have given us talents and abilities that we may enrich each other.

Lord you bless your Church with great riches, with people of talent, with a variety of gifts. Help us to use them aright to your glory and for the benefit of all. We remember especially all who lead us in worship and who teach us the faith. Show us your ways, O Lord,  
**and teach us your paths.**

Gracious God, what a wonderful world you have given us. We ask your blessing upon all who work the land and who provide food for us. We remember all who are working in conservation and in caring for people in desolate or spoiled areas. Show us your ways, O Lord,  
**and teach us your paths.**

We thank you for the comfort of our homes and the gifts you have given to each member of our families and loved ones. Help us to be aware of each other's needs and the needs of those who are not as well off as we are. Show us your ways, O Lord,  
**and teach us your paths.**

Lord, you are always ready to help us in our troubles. We bring before you the sorrows and sighings of our world especially during this time of pandemic. We remember all who suffer, all who are in hospital, all who are lonely and feel rejected. We think of those who are fearful of the future and those whose lives are full of sadness. We lift to you those known to us who are in need of prayer this day... and those named on our prayer list Freddy, John, Tatiana Crosby, Karen Beale, Joy Johnson, David Mullen, Kim Johnstone, Marion & Brian Dethridge, Julie, David Cleg, Ron White, Terry Coburn, Jean Hawes, Angie Skinner, Seamus McGeoghan, Edna Coles, Doris Healy and Alison. Show us your ways, O Lord,  
**and teach us your paths.**

We praise you for the gift of eternal life. We pray for all our loved ones who are departed from us and are now rejoicing in the fullness of your kingdom. We pray for Gladys Pile, Iris Brown, Brian Jones, Janet Rolfe and Lynn Worf. We remember

those whose anniversary of death occurs in February Beatrice Dyer, Sydney Shiret, Edith Lawson, Kenneth Brett, Alfred Griffiths, Elsie Harding-Gill, Brian Southgate, John Motton, Ron Graves, Doris Crocker, Albert Ware

Merciful Father

**accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.**

**Amen**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

**Hymn:** Lead us Heavenly Father Lead us

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us  
o'er the world's tempestuous sea;  
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us  
for we have no help but thee;  
yet possessing every blessing  
if our God our Father be.

Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us,  
all our weakness thou dost know;  
thou didst tread this earth before us,  
thou didst feel its keenest woe;  
lone and dreary, faint and weary,  
through the desert thou didst go

Spirit of our God, descending,  
fill our hearts with heavenly joy;  
love with every passion blending,  
pleasure that can never cloy:  
thus provided, pardoned, guided,  
nothing can our peace destroy.

*James Edmeston (1791-1867).*

### **The Blessing:**

May God the Father assure you of his faithful love and compassion.

May God the Son be alongside you with encouragement and guidance in times of difficulty.

May God the Holy Spirit strengthen your faith and bring you into ever closer union with the Trinity.

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us all, this day and evermore.

Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord

**In the name of Christ. Amen**

### **Acknowledgements**

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