



First Sunday of Lent

Book of Common Prayer (BCP) Morning Prayer

Dispersed community prayer at 10:30am
(But God will hear our prayers anytime!)

*You are invited to guard time for us to be together, united in prayer in one faith,
to our one Lord*

*This first Sunday of Lent, we shall draw on the more traditional liturgy from the Book
of Common Prayer, 1662.*

You may wish to prepare by lighting a candle

- ◆ denotes an optional pause to keep silence and meditate on the words
- 🔊 Denotes optional audio / video version from the church website:
<https://widcombe.church/our-churches/church-life/church-online/>

Preparation by confession and prayer

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us: but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. *1 St. John 1.8-9*

Dearly beloved brethren, the Scripture moveth us in sundry places to acknowledge and confess our manifold sins and wickedness; and that we should not dissemble nor cloke them before the face of Almighty God our heavenly Father; but confess them with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart; to the end that we may obtain forgiveness of the same, by his infinite goodness and mercy. And although we ought at all times humbly to acknowledge our sins before God; yet ought we most chiefly so to do, when we assemble and meet together to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at his hands, to set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his most holy Word, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul. Wherefore I pray and beseech you, as many as are here present, to accompany me with a pure heart and humble voice unto the throne of the heavenly grace, saying after me:

A general Confession:

Almighty and most merciful Father, We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, We have offended against thy holy laws, We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, And we have done those things which we ought not to have done, And there is no health in us: But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders; Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults, Restore thou them that are penitent, According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord: And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, To the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.

By way of Absolution in the home, The Collect for the twenty-first Sunday after Trinity:

Grant, we beseech thee, merciful Lord, to thy faithful people pardon and peace; that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that 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.

O Lord, open thou our lips.

And our mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

O God, make speed to save us.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

Amen.

Praise ye the Lord.

The Lord's Name be praised.

Give thanks and praise God: Venite, Exultemus Domino

Psalms 95

O come, let us sing unto the Lord :
let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving :
and show ourselves glad in him with psalms.
For the Lord is a great God :
and a great King above all gods.
In his hand are all the corners of the earth :
and the strength of the hills is his also.
The sea is his, and he made it :
and his hands prepared the dry land.
O come, let us worship and fall down :
and kneel before the Lord our Maker.
For he is the Lord our God :
and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.
Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts :
as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness;
When your fathers tempted me :
proved me, and saw my works.

Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said :
It is a people that do err in their hearts, for they have not known my ways.
Unto whom I swear in my wrath :
that they should not enter into my rest.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son :
and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be:
world without end. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
Born of the Virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, dead, and buried: He descended into hell;
The third day he rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost;
The holy Catholic Church;
The Communion of Saints;
The Forgiveness of sins;
The Resurrection of the body,
And the Life everlasting.
Amen.

Hymn

1. Jesus, lover of my soul,
let me to thy bosom fly,
while the nearer waters roll,
while the tempest still is high.
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
till the storm of life is past;
safe into the haven guide;
O receive my soul at last.

2. Other refuge have I none,
hangs my helpless soul on thee;
leave, ah! leave me not alone,
still support and comfort me.
All my trust on thee is stayed,
all my help from thee I bring;
cover my defenceless head
with the shadow of thy wing.

3. Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
more than all in thee I find;
raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and holy is thy name,
I am all unrighteousness;
false and full of sin I am;
thou art full of truth and grace.

4. Plenteous grace with thee is found,
grace to cover all my sin;
let the healing streams abound,
make and keep me pure within.
Thou of life the fountain art,
freely let me take of thee;
spring thou up within my heart;
rise to all eternity.

The Word of God 

Old Testament reading: Genesis 9:8-17

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹ 'I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you ¹⁰ and with every living creature that was with you – the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you – every living creature on earth. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you: never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.'

¹² And God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: ¹³ I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. ¹⁶ Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.'

¹⁷ So God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.'

New Testament reading: Mark 1: 9-15

The baptism and testing of Jesus

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'

¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, ¹³ and he was in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Jesus announces the good news

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'

Reflection from Revd Judith Harries 🗣️

GOD'S SIGN FOR NOAH

Since the world began we have used signs and symbols in our everyday lives and religious rituals; to help us understand, to convey meaning and sometimes we see them as an omen of a great event, like the star over Bethlehem. I can hear some of you saying that the only signs you see are road traffic signs. But this isn't so, is it? Very few of us are not familiar with the *Smileys* we can send one another, usually on our mobile phones at the end of a message. And would any of us say when someone sends us a smiley we are not pleased? We are. Because the sender is usually indicating their love or care for us. These smileys, and countless other small graphic illustrations we can send one another are called *Emojis*.

The rainbow in the reading from Genesis this morning is, we could say, an ancient Emoji, a smiley from God to us, with His rainbow conveying a message of eternal love and care for the world.

Genesis is usually interpreted in one of two ways. It is either very much a children's story of animals and rainbows. Or, and the opposite extreme, a story of a God so angered by human rebellion that God floods the whole earth, nearly wiping everything out in a divine rage. It might be a bit of both, but neither contains the whole story, nor bears much truth.

What this passage from Genesis tells us is that God is looking for new way to establish the accord He intended between us. He wants harmony on earth, and is putting the option of destruction aside, *and seeking us as His own*. The sign of this covenant is God's bow in the clouds. A bow in the ancient world represented battle and to hang up one's bow meant you were retiring from battle. Therefore, this bow in the clouds is the sign of God's promise that, whatever else He does to seek our restoration, destruction is off the table. And the implication of this promise is that God will try everything else.

Clearly God did not create the rainbow for this moment. But it is now used as a symbol filled with new significance for the future; a reminder of God's commitment to earth and His creation. It is a promise *and* a sign of God remembering in a way that involves action; action with a specific reference to a prior commitment beginning with Noah. It is a sign of divine good will towards creation, even though judgement will continue.

The story therefore focuses on God and God's commitment to the world and the future, even a future in a world that is less than perfect. God will work in new ways

with the world and promises never to punish it like this again. Incredibly, with this promise God is deciding to carry on working with human beings who resent Him. He does not resign Himself to the evil in the world but will find a new way to deal with the problem of sin and evil existing in it.

If you like, it is an interim arrangement for a fixed time because it does not establish a personal relationship between God and people. It is between God and the earth only and separate to God's redemptive covenant of eternal life. Instead of destroying the earth with all its sin and evil, God will take the suffering caused by this sin into His own heart and bear it there for the sake of its future.

Today is the 1st Sunday in Lent and, looking at the passage read to us from Mark this morning, we surely see that The Cross of Jesus Christ is on the same path as the *divine promise made by God to Noah. It is the fulfilment of God's desire for His people and the establishment of God's plan for an eternal relationship with His people.* Mark covers a lot of territory in this passage. It pulls together Jesus' baptism, his temptation, his proclamation of the good news of God and the nearness of His Kingdom; ending with a call to repentance and belief.

The life of Jesus is put before us clearly and strongly. There is no escaping his mission on earth, or the meaning of it. And here Jesus is directly introduced to us. Previously, he was spoken of by John the Baptist as 'the greater one who is coming.' Now he has come from Nazareth in Galilee to be baptised by his cousin John. In submitting to John's baptism Jesus acknowledges God's judgement on Israel, but at the same time accepting he is willing to bear the brunt of this judgement. Jesus is accepting being numbered with the transgressors. He didn't need to but he is the true Israelite whose repentance, unlike that of Israel, is perfect.

Importantly, the baptism of Jesus, here at the beginning of Mark, provides some essential clues about Jesus for us; to his identity and an understanding of what will follow.

Mark has recorded the submission of Jesus to a baptism of repentance, the gift of the Spirit, a declaration of divine Sonship and his unique relationship with God. He is set apart from *all* others and this is confirmed by a voice from heaven:

"You are my Son whom I love, with you I am well pleased".

Words which have their roots in the Old Testament (Isaiah 42:1) :

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight".

We also have here in Mark a clear revelation of the Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Then, immediately after his baptism, Jesus is sent out into the desert to be confronted and tempted by Satan. What's the hurry we might ask? The answer is that God the Father sent Jesus the Son into the world to defeat sin and death and it is time to get on with the job. There will be time to celebrate later, after the resurrection, when the job is done. The confrontation and temptation of Jesus in the desert by Satan is important because there will be a sustained attack throughout Jesus' ministry, and the temptation will not stop.

Having a son in the Army I compare the time Jesus spent in the desert to basic military training; an intense, mostly painful time designed to prepare a recruit for the difficult challenges he will later face. His baptism was a commissioning and his

temptation in the desert a strengthening and toughening experience to help sustain the ongoing onslaught from God's old adversary and opponent, Satan.

Lent is significant for Christians and usually linked to this time Jesus spends in the desert resisting temptation. 'Wilderness' is a word often used but I am going to stick with *desert*, the word used in the Greek and also because it reminds me of the 'Desert Fathers'. These were the holy men, later joined by women, who went out to live in the deserts of Palestine, Syria and Egypt in the 3rd century. They were Christian hermits seeking a deeper relationship with God away from the distraction of busyness and noise of life in the towns and cities. Desert life was very hard. There were none of the comforts to be found in a town and it was also very much about surviving the harsh conditions. Their settlements grew and eventually became monastic orders. Their way of life and writings had a major influence on the development of Christianity and Christian traditions; especially the way the presence of God was practiced alongside all the tasks required of them to live in the desert as they did. The great thing is they found great joy in their hardship and passed on this joy in their spiritual writings.

The events of Holy Week are, of course, not new to us and this is an issue we have to get round, but the approach to this week can be very special for each of us. Beginning I urge, with what we do during Lent. While Lent is a time when we can dwell in the certainty of our faith, it is also a time when we can explore, in different ways, what our belief means to us.... a sort of a review. It can be very rewarding if we commit the time, either individually or as part of a Lent group. Even both!

Being a Christian doesn't mean our lives are characterised by a long and continuous series of high moments. *Far from it!* Mostly we experience a series of hills and valleys, floods and droughts. The baptism of Jesus is a grand moment but it is followed by him *immediately* being sent into the desert to be tested. Christians very often feel this is a model to be followed during Lent. They undergo a period of self-sacrifice to test their self-discipline to represent Jesus' temptation in the desert. Others decide, instead of giving up something they will give their time to other people, helping them. This year the Covid lockdown, and all the restrictions we are currently having to live with doesn't make either model easy. Maybe it's the time for something altogether new. For example, we could follow the Desert Fathers into the desert seeking a deeper relationship with God. We can go looking for the joy experienced by them, finding it in ourselves and in our everyday lives. In addition, we might have things to sort with God. Who doesn't? Lent is a good time to do this, and especially now when we have more time because our activities are limited. We have time, to put it another way, *to get up-front-and-personal* with God.

Jesus was vulnerable in the desert. It would have been very easy for him to give up. And so it is with us. We are full of human weaknesses and, because of this, vulnerable to anything opposing God or what He wants for us. Of course we can have an easier life by giving in to worldly demands. We can even enjoy them.
Why shouldn't we?

Because we have a commitment to the God who put a rainbow into the clouds for Noah, and us, to show He remembers and cares for us. He made a promise to the world, and us.

A promise that became the New Covenant, instituted at the Last Supper as part of the Eucharist.

"This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you".

A New Covenant which comes into force with the death of Jesus Christ. His blood shed at the Crucifixion is the blood of the New Covenant and mediates it to all of us until the Second Coming when God's promise will be completely fulfilled.

Amen.

Suggested reading for Lent:

The Way of the Heart (The Way of the Desert) by Henri Nouwen

The Easter Stories

Imagining God } all 3 books by Trevor Dennis

Keeping God Company

The Practice of the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence

All available at online bookstores

Prayers

A Prayer for Bath 

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace
Where there is hatred, let me sow love
Where there is injury, pardon
Where there is doubt, faith
Where there is despair, hope
Where there is darkness, light
And where there is sadness, joy

O Divine Master, grant that I may
Not so much seek to be consoled as to console
To be understood, as to understand
To be loved, as to love
For it is in giving that we receive
And it's in pardoning that we are pardoned
And it's in dying that we are raised to Eternal Life
Amen

Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.
Amen.

The First Collect, for The First Sunday of Lent

O LORD, who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights: Give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to thy honour and glory, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

The Second Collect, for Peace

O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom: Defend us thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in thy defence, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Third Collect, for Grace

O Lord, our heavenly Father, Almighty and everlasting God, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this day: Defend us in the same with thy mighty power; and grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger; but that all our doings may be ordered by thy governance, to do always that is righteous in thy sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for the Queen's Majesty.

O Lord, our heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of kings, Lord of lords, the only Ruler of princes, who dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth: Most heartily we beseech thee with thy favour to behold our most gracious Sovereign Lady, Queen ELIZABETH; and so replenish her with the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that she may alway incline to thy will, and walk in thy way. Endue her plenteously with heavenly gifts; grant her in health and wealth long to live; strengthen her that she may vanquish and overcome all her enemies; and finally after this life she may attain everlasting joy and felicity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for the Royal Family.

Almighty God, the fountain of all goodness, we humbly beseech thee to bless Philip Duke of Edinburgh, Charles Prince of Wales, and all the Royal Family: Endue them with thy Holy Spirit; enrich them with thy heavenly grace; prosper them with all happiness; and bring them to thine everlasting kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for the Clergy and People.

Almighty and everlasting God, who alone workest great marvels: Send down upon our Bishops, and Curates, and all Congregations committed to their charge, the healthful Spirit of thy grace; and that they may truly please thee, pour upon them

the continual dew of thy blessing. Grant this, O Lord, for the honour of our Advocate and Mediator, Jesus Christ. Amen.

For Deliverance from the Plague, or other common Sickness.

O Lord God, who hast wounded us for our sins, and consumed us for our transgressions, by thy late heavy and dreadful visitation; and now, in the midst of judgement remembering mercy, hast redeemed our souls from the jaws of death: We offer unto thy fatherly goodness ourselves, our souls and bodies which thou hast delivered, to be a living sacrifice unto thee, always praising and magnifying thy mercies in the midst of thy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Concluding in Prayer

A Prayer of Saint Chrysostom.

Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee; and dost promise that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name thou wilt grant their requests: Fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. Amen.

2 Corinthians 13.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.