

Lent 1 - Sunday 21st February

Opening Hymn

**Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art.
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.**

**Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word;
I ever with thee, and thou with me, Lord.
Thou my great Father, and I thy true heir;
thou in me dwelling and I in thy care.**

**Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight.
Be thou my armour, and be thou my might,
thou my soul's shelter, and thou my high tow'r.
Raise thou me heav'nward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.**

**Riches I need not, nor all the world's praise;
thou mine inheritance through all my days.
Thou and thou only, the first in my heart,
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art.**

**High King of heaven, when battle is done
Grant heaven's joys to me, O bright heav'n's Sun!
Christ of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.**

Eleanor Hull, Mary Byrne: Public Domain

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
and also with you.

Confession - we acknowledge our sins, and pray for healing and forgiveness

Summary of the Law

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

(Pause for reflection)

The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit;

a broken and contrite heart God will not despise.

Let us come to the Lord, who is full of compassion, and acknowledge our transgressions in penitence and faith.

Lord, wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin:

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight:

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me: *cf Psalm 51*
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Absolution

May the God of all healing and forgiveness
draw *us* to himself
and cleanse *us* from all *our* sins,
that we may behold the glory of his Son,
the Word made flesh,
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Response to God's mercy and forgiveness:

**Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.
Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.**

**Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!
Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.**

Thomas Obediah Chisholm, William Marion Runyan. © 1923.

Renewed 1951 Hope Publishing Company CCLI SONG # 18723

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

1st Reading: 1 Peter 3:18-22. (NIV)

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. **19** After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—**20** to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, **21** and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, **22** who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Response:

**Here is love vast as the ocean,
Loving kindness as a flood
When the prince of life our ransom,
Shed for us His precious blood
Who his love will not remember,**

**Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten,
Throughout heavn's eternal days**

**On the mount of crucifixion,
Fountains opened deep and wide
Through the floodgates of God's mercy,
Flowed a vast and gracious tide
Grace and love like mighty rivers,
Flowed incessant from above
Heavens peace and perfect justice,
Kissed a guilty world with love**

*Ian Yates, Robert Lowry, William Rees. © 2009 Thankyou Music.
CCLI SONG #. 5827118*

Gospel Acclamation

**Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.
The Lord is a great God, O that today
you would listen to his voice.
Harden not your hearts. cf Psalm 95.3,8**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark
Glory to you, O Lord.

Mark 1:9-15 New International Version (NIV)

The Baptism and Testing of Jesus

9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized 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 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!"

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you O Christ.**

Sermon - Preached by Jenny Dann, Reader at St Michael's, Shefford.

I love the simplicity of Mark's Gospel - its directness, its energy, but also what it doesn't say - the hidden things, the gems that you have to dig deep for, and which even then remain mysterious. 'Don't tell anyone' is a repeated refrain: 'Don't tell anyone - not until the right time.'

Mark's account of the Temptation of Jesus in the wilderness - the story that launches our Lenten journey - is both brief and intriguing. Let's hear it again.

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

It makes you want to know more, and yet - it's almost as though Mark doesn't want or dare to trespass onto such private territory - the inner spiritual battle Jesus has to undergo before embarking on his God-given and universe-changing ministry. How can we truly know what Jesus went through in the desert - any more than we can truly know what he went

through on the Cross? We have always to wait for the right time, for God to reveal as much of the full story as we are able to hear and respond to at each stage in our own journey.

Like Simon and Andrew, James and John, we accept Jesus's call to follow him with only a little understanding of what his call and our mission might entail. Some of you will have heard me say before that, if I had known in earlier years what God had in store for me to do, I would have run several miles in the opposite direction! But I didn't know, and couldn't, because God needed to unfold his story in me step by step, year by year, giving me time to discover the hidden gems in even those periods of struggle and darkness that came my way. And such periods aren't, of course, limited to the beginning of our walk with Jesus - they can come upon us at any time in our lives, no matter how long we've been believers. Jesus's battle with Satan wasn't completed in the wilderness - no, that victory (which is ours too) had to wait until the triumphant cry, "It is finished!" from the Cross on Good Friday.

And from there the story widens further and further, as we heard in our first reading from 1 Peter: "Christ died for our sins once for all," bringing salvation to all people - including those who lived before he came! The victory of the Cross, signed and sealed by Easter Resurrection, reaches forward to Christ's eternal reign over all things.

But that's the end of the story, the destination: the reality of our lives here and now is that, however strong our faith may be, the journey can be hard - as it was for Jesus. That's why we do Lent each year - not to wallow in hardship and misery, but to acknowledge the reality of our spiritual journey - our

highs and lows, our sense of calling and our lack of understanding, our certainty and our doubt; and maybe also to make us more sympathetic and less judgmental towards those whose internal battles are and will remain a mystery to us. Just as we cannot know what Jesus truly went through in the desert, in the same way we cannot know what the mental and spiritual struggles of our fellow pilgrims are really like, what wild animals they have to face, nor how significant are the small victories they may achieve with the help of their Saviour Jesus and with a little patient love from us - and from angels.

Maybe Lent is a time to be more accepting of the wilderness experiences of others, as well as our own. Can you think of a time when the support and kindness of someone else made all the difference when you were feeling lost or struggling in your faith? I certainly can - and thank God for them. Let's offer this gift to one another; even if we can't do it in person we can do it in prayer.

You don't need me to tell you that the last year has been a long and challenging wilderness experience for very many people. History will probably tell it as briefly as Mark does the Temptation of Jesus: but the depth of suffering and struggle cannot be measured or fully told in words. Nevertheless we hold firmly to these simple truths revealed by God: first, that there is no dark place which our Saviour Jesus has not already gone to and shared for our sake; secondly, Jesus is present with us in all our struggles, calling us to follow him; and lastly, Jesus has the eternal victory over darkness, and evil, and death. He is our Light, our Rock and our Eternal Joy.

It shall be so. Amen.

Response:

**Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.**

**We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.**

**I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.**

**I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow,
till we've seen this journey through.**

**When we sing to God in heaven,
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.**

**Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.**

*Richard Gillard: 1977 ©. Universal Music - Brentwood Benson
Publishing CCLI song # 72673*

Our Declaration of Faith

Let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

**Though he was divine,
he did not cling to equality with God,
but made himself nothing.
Taking the form of a slave,
he was born in human likeness.
He humbled himself
and was obedient to death,
even the death of the cross.
Therefore God has raised him on high,
and given him the name above every name:
that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow,
and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.**

Amen.

cf Philippians 2.6-11

Intercessions: Led by Pete and Beccy Clark - of St Mary's Meppershall (*based on costablanca-anglicanchaplaincy.org*)

Everlasting God, your Son Jesus Christ was tried and tempted by the devil. May we never be ashamed of temptation, knowing that Jesus shared those struggles with us, and instead be saved from the weakness of giving in. Help us choose the way of faithfulness rather than popularity, service rather than fame, and sacrifice rather than power.
Lord in your mercy, **Hear our Prayer**

Gracious God, we pray for the whole family of your church here in our local community. May all your people be built up in faith and demonstrate in their lives the gospel of Jesus Christ especially as, at this time, we are struggling to meet together because of the pandemic. Help us to play our part in the life of the church throughout the world; through our prayers and by our gifts during this season of Lent and beyond. Give courage to those who find it hard to follow you; let them find encouragement rather than judgement when facing spiritual struggles. Give us a fresh vision that leads to action and strengthen us to serve you in the places where we live.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our Prayer**

Creator God, we pray for those in positions of authority and leadership; that they do not misuse their powers but respect and care for all their people and for the natural resources of their countries. During this time of Lent, may we be constantly aware of those in our world who are always hungry and thirsty and of all those who have so little when we have so much.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our Prayer**

Father God, we ask you to protect our loved ones, our friends and our neighbours. We pray that this Lent may bring grace to our friends and relatives who no longer practice their faith, and that they may return in the certain knowledge of your loving acceptance of them.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our Prayer**

Loving God, we pray for those who are ill and in pain longing to live full lives, for those who are sad and longing for comfort, for those in hospital awaiting treatment and for those

on the journey to recovery. May we always offer gentle support to those in trouble, sensitive encouragement to those in need, and strength and support to those in weakness. We especially pray for those suffering from Coronavirus.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our Prayer**

Merciful God, we pray for those saddened by the death of someone close to them. Give them your comfort as they mourn for their loved ones and turn their darkness into light. We commend to your everlasting love and care those who have died and we pray that they will rest eternally in the light of Christ.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our Prayer**

Gracious God, help us to see this time of Lent as an opportunity to develop our discipleship and discipline. As your Son Jesus showed us how to reject temptation, fill us with grace to be faithful to his example during this season of Lent and the years ahead.

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

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

**Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

Notices and Birthdays

The BLESSING

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,
to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him;
and the blessing ...

Final Hymn

**He who would valiant be 'gainst all disaster
Let him in constancy follow the Master
There's no discouragement shall make him once relent
His first avowed intent to be a pilgrim**

**Who so beset him round with dismal stories
Do but themselves confound - his strength the more is
No foes shall stay his might; though he with giants fight
He will make good his right to be a pilgrim**

**Since, Lord, Thou dost defend us with Thy Spirit
We know we at the end, shall life inherit
Then fancies flee away! I'll fear not what men say
I'll labour night and day to be a pilgrim**

John Bunyan, Percy Dearmer. CCLI SONG #. 2550323. Public Domain

Heading Out Prayer

As we go, may...

The strength of God. **Guide us**

The power of God. **Preserve us**

The Wisdom of God **Instruct us**

And the Spirit of God...

be within us this day and ever more.

**Let us go out in the power the Spirit
to live and work to his praise and glory. Amen**

To James and Miriam Read our grateful thanks.

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Jesus fasted and prayed in the desert for 40 days



The devil tempted him - When the devil left him, God sent angels to look after Jesus



Into the Wilderness with Jesus

At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. Mark 1:12-13 (NIV)

The puzzle is based on Mark 1:12-15 (NIV)



U M F G T V N I W R Z D Z K S
L T E M P T E D K T E T A S N
S A T A N W Z A A O N P E Y U
C O G T N Y U N Q E Y N E G S
O I O L V Q N I S N R C F N Q
M N O J A F D M D E Y C D O T
E N D V A K E A D N O V F S S
I Z E O B V N L O D U X W Q H
F L R N E O I S F O R T Y K D
Q O V I Q W C L L I A I S L B
S H L J M I O F L D P L I P U
I E G R W N U Y V A E W G U C
B E M I N E W S B G C P E N V
S E P H T I M E N V X W M B K
V B T N K L P A Y O B M A L M

TEMPTED
NEWS
ANIMALS

SATAN
BELIEVE
DAYS

COME
TIME
SENT

REPENT
FORTY
GOOD

WILDERNESS
ANGELS
WILD