

Worship@Home 18th February 2024

First Sunday in Lent

With Revd David Speirs

Opening Prayer:

God of revelation,
unveil your Kingdom in our midst.
Show us who we truly are in you:
expose the illusions that distort our vision,
deliver us from temptations that contort our
living, open our eyes in this time of trial –
that resistance may be the secret of our joy
and our joy a sign of your shalom. **Amen.**

Christian Aid Monthly Prayers, Accessed through RE:Worship
<https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2020/02/prayer-for-start-of-lent.html>

STF 236 – *Forty Days and Forty Nights*

<https://youtu.be/Hkxj3mK3mVQ>

Forty days and forty nights
you were fasting in the wild;
forty days and forty nights
tempted and yet undefiled.

Burning heat throughout the day,
bitter cold when light had fled;
prowling beasts around your way,
stones your pillow, earth your bed.

Shall not we your trials share,
learn your discipline of will;
and with you by fast and prayer
wrestle with the powers of hell?

So if Satan, pressing hard,
soul and body would destroy:
Christ who conquered, be our guard;
give to us the victor's joy.

Saviour, may we hear your voice;
keep us constant at your side;
and with you we shall rejoice
at the eternal Eastertide.

H Smyttan (1822 - 1870) Jubilate Hymns version of Forty
days and forty nights George. © Jubilate Hymns Ltd.
CCLI#: 1041177

Please read:

Mark 1:9-15

<https://bible.oremus.org/?qj=480582746>

Time to Reflect

In the Gospel reading that we have for this Sunday, the first of the Lent season, Mark gives us a brief overview of the beginnings of Jesus ministry which starts with his baptism in the Jordan river, followed by the Spirit leading him into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan, and concluding with Jesus proclaiming the Kingdom of God. All of this happens in quick succession and many of the details that we find in the other gospels are not included in Mark's narrative. Instead, Mark briefly sets the scene for Jesus' ministry to give his readers and understanding of who Jesus is and what his ministry will be all about.

The first section that describes the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan by John establishes Jesus' unique status as the Son of God. Immediately following the baptism, as Jesus rises out of the water, we have the vision of a dove descending on Jesus representing the Holy Spirit and the voice of God announcing: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." Mark uses apocalyptic imagery of the heavens being "torn apart" in order to emphasise the dramatic impact of this event, in which God's power breaks through from heaven to earth and is centred upon the person of Jesus. This dramatic event fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah which longed for a time where God "would tear open the heavens and come down" (Isaiah 64:2) and in so doing establish God's Kingdom. Jesus is the fulfilment of these promises of God; the one who the prophets have foretold would bring in God's Kingdom and would God's presence amongst us.

After affirming Jesus' identity as God's 'beloved son' Jesus is then led into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan during a 40-day period. The number of days is significant as it is the same amount of time that Noah and his family spent on the Ark (Genesis 7:17) and the time that Moses stayed on Mount Sinai receiving the 10 commandments from God (Exodus 24:18). There is also a parallel with the 40 years that the Hebrew people spent wandering in the wilderness and forming their identity prior to entering the promised land (Joshua 5:6). During the 40 days Jesus is prepared for the ministry ahead of him. His rejection of Satan's temptations establish that he is the one who whilst experiencing temptation will never sin.

Jesus is the one who demonstrates the fullness of humanity in complete and perfect relationship with his own divinity. He rejects the temptation to sin and becomes the second (or last) Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45-49) in reference to the first Adam who gave way to temptation. Jesus' rejection of Satan sets up the path that he will take, to the cross, that would overcome the power of sin for humanity and the whole of creation, restoring and redeeming all things. Jesus time in the wilderness affirms him as the one who will accomplish God's redemptive purposes.

The third, and final, part of the section of Marks Gospel involves John being arrested and Jesus returning to Galilee to proclaim that the Kingdom of God was near and to encourage repentance and belief in the Good News. With John no longer active on the scene Jesus now shows himself as the one who John himself pointed to: the Messiah. However, in his ministry Jesus points not to himself but announces God's ultimate purposes. He goes on to demonstrate these purposes through miracles of healing and feeding, liberation from bondage to evil and injustice, the announcement of forgiveness and God's transforming power. In and through Jesus God's power disrupts the world around him and in so doing brings about a restoration.

As we go through the season of Lent, I encourage you to reflect on how Christ's ministry and presence, offered through the Holy Spirit, might change and effect you. I pray that this might be a time when we are all open to God's Spirit and able to be led to the people and places where we might see the transforming power of God and the Kingdom made real amongst us. May this Lent be a time of blessing, when you might remember that you are a beloved child of God and know his presence of peace with you. May God strengthen you through his Spirit and make his purpose clear again. Amen.

Prayer of Intercession

You are invited to pray silently for:

The needs of the world...
The Church and its calling...
Loved ones going through difficult times...
For peace, justice, and reconciliation...
In Jesus name. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven...

StF 404 -God's Spirit is in my heart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEUgyi4FT7I>

God's spirit is in my heart;
he has called me and set me apart.
This is what I have to do,
what I have to do:

*He sent me to give the good news to the poor,
tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more,
tell blind people that they can see,
and set the down-trodden free,
and go tell everyone
the news that the Kingdom of God has come;
and go tell everyone
the news that God's Kingdom has come.*

Just as the Father sent me,
so I'm sending you out to be
my witness throughout the world -
the whole of the world.

Don't carry a load in your pack;
you don't need two shirts on your back;
God's workers can earn their own keep -
Can earn their own keep:

Don't worry what you have to say;
Don't worry, because on that day
God's Spirit will speak in your heart -
Will speak in your heart:

Alan T Dale (1902 – 1979) & Hubert Richards (b. 1921). Words & Music
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CCLI Song Number: 4692612

Final Prayer

Whatever wilderness the Spirit has brought you to: walk in boldness, as a beloved child of God; walk in peace, under the shelter of the Most High; walk in faith, knowing Christ walks with you. Amen.

Prayer by Joanna Harader (<http://spaciousfaith.com/>) accessed at RE:Worship: <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2020/02/lenten-benediction.html>