

Worship@Home 26th February 2023 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, Prayer for the start of the Lent Season,
<https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2020/02/prayer-for-start-of-lent.html>

StF 236 – *Forty days and forty nights*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmXn_0c0yJs

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.

Jubilate Hymns version of Forty days and forty nights George H
Smyttan (1822 - 1870) © Jubilate Hymns Ltd.
https://www.jubilate.co.uk/songs/forty_days_and_forty_nights_jubilathe_version

Please read:

Matthew 4:1-11

<http://bible.oremus.org/?q1=256085037>

Time to Reflect

In the Gospel reading for the first Sunday in Lent, following his baptism, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. The temptations that Jesus faces include breaking his fast, through an act of self-sufficiency rather than relying on God's provision; testing God through an arbitrary self-serving act of recklessness and exhibitionism that involves jumping off the temple; and finally, worshipping Satan and being granted self-centred earthly power and control.

Jesus temptations are therefore a choice between being self-centred and self-serving with being God-centred and God-serving. On each occasion, Jesus responds by rejecting Satan's temptations and affirms his obedience to God and the Divine Kingdom. The third temptation, in particular, seeks to draw Jesus's allegiances away from the Kingdom of God to become a worldly ruler. The major power of Jesus' time, Rome, ruled through military oppression, slavery, and through idolatry that justified its control. It also used vassals, such as King Herod, to reinforce its rule. Jesus rejects this worldly model in favour of God's Kingdom of liberative love and life giving freedom in the power of the Spirit. In so doing he observes God's sovereignty and good purposes for the world.

Jesus experience in wilderness in some ways mirrors the experience of the ancient Jewish people when they left the land of Egypt, and wandered in the desert wilderness, before reaching the Promised Land. During this time the Jewish people are tested while they receive and follow their laws and ordinances from God and develop their identity as God's people. By passing his tests in the wilderness Jesus demonstrates his identity as the beloved and only Son of God, who has come to liberate humanity from sin, and as the one who is dedicated not to and self-sufficiency and self-centredness but rather loving self-giving and self-sacrifice.

As we enter this season of Lent it may feel like we are wandering in a place of wilderness, particularly when it comes to our faith lives and our life together as a church. We may see a landscape that is dry and challenging and with many risks to our faith.

This is why we, like Jesus, must also hold to the promises of God and continue to live faithfully and in obedience to his commandments, particularly his command to love and to avoid selfish ways of being.

When times are difficult it is tempting for us to pursue goals that are self-serving in which we seek to dominate and control others. Yet the wilderness experience of Jesus reminds us that we are to wait on God, who is the source of all our provision and offers us the good governance that comes through the rule of love. The wilderness is a time for us to re-discover who we are in relation to God, to avoid temptation, to repent from evil, and to affirm our identity in Christ as we walk with him in the way of liberative and transforming love that takes us to the cross and the resurrection.

I hope and pray that during this season of Lent that we might be guided by God's Spirit, committing ourselves to God's Kingdom and to following Jesus. And in doing this we might be finding our identity in Christ, our hope, our liberator, and the saviour of the world.

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 351 – In Christ Alone

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKJfs8C14yc>

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! – Who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied –
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory,
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine –
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand:
Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

Stuart Townend & Keith Getty
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Final Prayer

The Israelite prophet Micah said:
"What does the Lord require of you? Only to act justly, love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8).

God of mercy and source of justice,
pour on your people such love and
compassion that we cannot remain silent,
we cannot tolerate injustice and poverty. As
your grace fills our hearts so may we be
stirred into action to demonstrate your love for
all the world and for all creatures that live and
move on this earth. In Jesus name, Amen.

Adapted from 'call to action', prayers for Lent & Easter.
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/lent-and-easter/prayers-for-lent-and-easter/>