

Reflections & Prayers for the First Sunday of Lent

21 February 2021



The Temptation of Jesus

The keeping of the season of Lent has always been seen as a time of preparation of Christians for the celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ in Holy Week and at Easter. It is customary for this time be marked by penitence expressed in prayer and fasting and self examination. The weekly reflections in Lent @home and in the challenges from the Eco Church team may be a good place to start.

Contents

Readings for this Sunday	p. 2
Reflection	p. 3-4
Prayers and Reflections for our Lenten Journey	p. 5
Prayers for the beginning of Lent	p. 5-6
Parish Prayers	p. 7-8
St John's Lent Eco-challenge 2021	p. 8
Church opening	p. 8
World Day of Prayer	p. 8-9

Readings for this Sunday

These are the readings for this Sunday which you may like to read in your bibles at home.

Genesis 9.8-17
1 Peter 3.18-22
Mark 1.9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 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. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

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

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

Reflection from David Nye

Three years ago, a group of us from St Johns went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. During our visit, we glimpsed the river Jordan, the river where Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist as we have just heard.

It was then that Jesus must have become aware of his very special relationship with God as he heard the voice that came from heaven saying "You are my beloved son: with you I am well pleased". Yet the revelation of God's plan did not lead to a triumphant journey into the promised land like Joshua's journey centuries before. For Jesus, it was a journey of hardship and humility leading first into the wilderness and temptation by Satan, to derision and hostility from those he came to save, and finally to Jerusalem and an apparent humiliating and agonising death on a cross.

It may seem odd to us but for Jesus, baptism itself meant a foretaste of his own death and resurrection. It meant that in his baptism, as he was plunged into the waters of the river, he was plunged into death but as he came out, he was filled with God's Holy Spirit as he heard those words of the father. Later, with his disciples, Jesus referred to his coming death and resurrection as a type of baptism. He challenged them by asking whether they too could go through this baptism with him; in other words, were they prepared for the pain and suffering that has to be endured before they shared in the new life that God offered.

In some ways, the OT story about Noah and the flood is also about baptism. God had created a wonderful world with everything that was needed to live and to enjoy life. Yet the people he created think they know better: they believe that they can do without God and do things their own way. Rather than destroy the disobedient people and start again, God chooses a single family and a pair of all living creatures. He tells Noah to build an enormous boat, so that they can all be saved from the great flood that will cover the earth. And cover the earth it does: yet Noah and his family survive. God brings them safely through the flood onto dry land and offers mankind a new start.

We can see the story of Noah as another aspect of baptism. Although the flood water destroyed the world, the water that floated the ark saved Noah and his family.

God's new creation started with Noah, continues with the baptism, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus and continues even today. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus saves us from our sins, and leads us into new life and our own baptism unites us with Jesus. At our baptism, we entered into the death of Jesus but we were also raised to new life just as Jesus was raised to new life on Easter Day.

In the Holy Land, our eyes were opened to see for ourselves where our Lord had lived and taught, where he had been arrested, crucified, where he had been buried and where he had been raised. It was truly wonderful. But our eyes were also opened to the Holy land of today, sadly still a place of bitterness and strife and where the peace is fragile. For some, life is very tough.

As we journey through this season of Lent, we pray that our eyes may be opened each day to give thanks to our Saviour Jesus Christ, who created us and who has given us, through his love, an abundant world. Just like Noah, we live in a sinful and corrupt world and often we read, and sometimes we see, examples that must grieve our Lord. We ourselves are not blameless as we reflect on our own failures and weaknesses, the times when we have not loved God and not loved our neighbour, the times when we think we can do without God.

In these coming weeks we are invited to walk with our Lord through the despair and the darkness of this world until we see our Lord nailed to the cross on Good Friday. At times, like our Lord but in different ways, there will be hardship and pain and suffering for us. Indeed, many of us have our own cross to bear in our struggles in day to day living. But we know that in the end, the light of Christ **will** prevail and on Easter Day we will see the empty tomb. Like Noah we are offered a new start. Our eyes will be opened to see that God in his infinite love and mercy has raised Christ from the dead and we too can share in that glorious resurrection to new life. Amen

Prayers and Reflections for our Lenten Journey

An opportunity to journey through Lent as an individual, family or support bubble. Each week there is a suggested reading and prayer, using symbols of the Lenten journey. May you have a blessed Lent and remember that God loves you - always.

Into the Wilderness: Lent 1

Week beginning 21st February – *find a rock or some pebbles*

Just between his baptism and the beginning of his adult ministry, Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days, “to be tested”.



Read the story of Jesus wandering in the desert - Luke 4:1-11

The Judean is a barren and rocky place. Hold the rock, feel its weight. I wonder ... Have you ever felt that you have been tested? When have you walked on hard, barren or stony ground? What have you learned there? What might you learn there?

Prayer: Holy God, help us when we walk through the difficult places in our lives. Help us to know that the closer we walk to you, the closer you will be to us. Amen.

Prayers for the beginning of Lent

We pray to the Lord for courage to give up other things and to give ourselves to him this Lent.
Give your Church the courage
to give up her preoccupation with herself
and to give more time to your mission in the world.
May the blood and water flowing from the side of Jesus
bring forgiveness to your people
and help us to face the cost of proclaiming salvation.
Lord, meet us in the silence,
give us strength and hear our prayer.

Give your world the courage
to give up war, bitterness and hatred,
and to seek peace.
May the shoulders of the risen Jesus,
once scourged by soldiers,
bear the burden of political and military conflict in our world.
Lord, meet us in the silence,
give us strength and hear our prayer.

Give us the courage to give up quarrels, strife and jealousy
in our families, neighbourhoods and communities.
May the presence of the risen Jesus,
his body once broken and now made whole,
bring peace and direction as we live with one another.
Lord, meet us in the silence,
give us strength and hear our prayer.

Give us the courage
to give up our selfishness as we live for others,
and to give time, care and comfort to the sick.
May the wounded hands of Jesus bring his healing touch,
and the light of his presence fill their rooms.
Lord, meet us in the silence,
give us strength and hear our prayer.

Give us the courage to give up our fear of death
and to rejoice with those who have died in faith.
May the feet of the risen Lord Jesus, once nailed to the cross,
walk alongside the dying and bereaved in their agony,
and walk with us and all your Church
through death to the gate of glory.
Lord, meet us in the silence,
**give us strength and hear our prayer,
here and in eternity. Amen.**

Parish Prayers for the week ahead

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	The Church of the Province of Central Africa
Monday	The Diocese of Argentina – The Anglican Church of South America
Tuesday	The Diocese of Northern Argentina – The Anglican Church of South America
Wednesday	The Diocese of Argyll & The Isles – The Scottish Episcopal Church
Thursday	The Diocese of Arizona – The Episcopal Church
Friday	The Diocese of Arkansas – The Episcopal Church
Saturday	The Diocese of Armagh – The Church of Ireland

In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	Parish of Totteridge (Deanery of Barnet)
Monday	Parish of Bedford, All Saints (Deanery of Bedford)
Tuesday	Parish of Bedford, Christ Church (Deanery of Bedford)
Wednesday	Parish of Bedford, St Andrew (Deanery of Bedford)
Thursday	Parish of Bedford, St John and St Leonard (Deanery of Bedford)
Friday	Parish of Bedford, St Mark (Deanery of Bedford)
Saturday	Parish of Bedford, St Martin (Deanery of Bedford)

For the homes and families in:

Sunday	Southdown Road, Stonehurst Court
Monday	Tarrant Drive, Tiverton Court
Tuesday	Topstreet Way, The Uplands
Wednesday	Vallance Place, The Warren
Thursday	Welbeck Rise, Walkers Close
Friday	Walkers Court, Walkers Road
Saturday	Wensley Close, West Common

The Sick:

Amy, Claire, Sue, Christine, Hermione, Karen, Enid, Chris, Sophie and all whose names are entered on our St Luke's Cell Prayer List.

For the recently deceased:

Sheila Burley, Jo Young, Francis Stephen, Trevor Neal

On their year's mind:

David Tester-Wilson, David Atkin, David Jennings, Margaret Gander.

[St John's Lent Eco-challenge 2021 17th February – 3rd April](#)

The Eco-church team have devised a set of challenges for Lent. These are all connected with our theme of 'Caring for God's World'. There is a different topic each week, and you are encouraged to do two or three challenges each week, at the level that suits you. Several challenges have two levels. We include opportunities to appreciate the natural world, simple things you can do to save energy and water, ideas about recycling, and suggestions on how to reduce your 'carbon footprint'. We have included stars for you to tick/colour when you complete a challenge!

Week 1: Biodiversity (Feb 22nd – 28th)

- Keep a list of birds/insects/animals that you see or hear this week
Apply something from the 'how green is your garden' article in the Parish Magazine, e.g. leave an area in your garden for wildlife, start a compost bin, buy peat-free compost, make a pond...
- Feed the birds / put up a bird nest box or bee hotel
- Reduce your use of single-use plastic by half this week

[Church opening](#)

The coronavirus continues to spread alarmingly. It is because of that and in the light of government advice to stay at home whenever possible that it has been decided to close the church. **It is now only open on Sunday after the service (which will continue) until 4pm.** The decision will be reviewed as circumstances change but in any event before the end of February.

[WORLD DAY OF PRAYER - FRIDAY 5TH MARCH at 10.30am](#)

This year the World Day of Prayer will be rather different as we are gathering on Zoom to celebrate the service from home. It has been prepared by the Christian women of Vanuatu (scattered islands over 1100 miles to the east of Australia) on the theme "Build on a Strong Foundation" (Matt 7:24-27), particularly appropriate at the present time!

If you would like to join us, please contact Pat Hudis via the Parish Office so you can receive the Zoom details and an order of service. Even If you cannot access Zoom, an order of service can be delivered to you if you let us know.

Last year, in the UK alone, WDP raised over £100,000 which was distributed to more than 30 projects at home and abroad - and urgently needs our support this year.

If you'd like to make a donation, please visit wwdp.org.uk. Thank you very much.

[A reminder... of this phone service:](#)

Daily Hope – dial 0800 804 8044 for prayer, reflection, music and worship services from the Church of England. A weekly service is available from 9 am every Sunday.

[Church at home:](#)

We are delighted to produce each week these printed papers. If you would prefer not to receive these papers each week, please let Julie in the parish office know. If you are aware of others in the parish who would also value the opportunity to worship at home in this way, do please contact a member of the Ministry team or Julie (Parish Office Tel: 01582 712776).