



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION  
SUNDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2024 – LENT 1**

**COLLECT**

Almighty God,  
whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness,  
and was tempted as we are, yet without sin:  
give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit;  
and, as you know our weakness,  
so may we know your power to save;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

**Psalm 25.1-9**

- 1 To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; O my God, in you I trust; ♦  
let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies triumph over me.
- 2 Let none who look to you be put to shame, ♦  
but let the treacherous be shamed and frustrated.
- 3 Make me to know your ways, O Lord, ♦  
and teach me your paths.
- 4 Lead me in your truth and teach me, ♦  
for you are the God of my salvation; for you have I hoped all the day long.
- 5 Remember, Lord, your compassion and love, ♦  
for they are from everlasting.
- 6 Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions, ♦  
but think on me in your goodness, O Lord, according to your steadfast love.
- 7 Gracious and upright is the Lord; ♦  
therefore shall he teach sinners in the way.
- 8 He will guide the humble in doing right ♦  
and teach his way to the lowly.
- 9 All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth ♦  
to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

## Genesis 9.8-17

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 'As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.' God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.' God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.'

For the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

***At Morning Prayer, the Gospel is simply the second reading, people sit to hear it and is introduced in the same way as the first:***

The second reading is from Mark, chapter 1, verses 9-15.

***and then at the end:***

For the word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God.**

***For Eucharists/ Communion people stand to hear the Gospel and it is introduced with an Acclamation, as below:***

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory.

**Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory.**

I am the light of the world, says the Lord. Whoever follows me has the light of life.

**Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory.**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Mark, chapter 1 verses 9-15.

**Glory to you, O Lord**

***And then at the end:***

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

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.'

## ***A Reflection from Peter...***

Way back in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, one of the great early figures in the Church of England, Bishop Jeremy Taylor, wrote an enormous book *'Ductor Dubitantium'* which was to help Christians make the right choices and decisions in life. The book was published in 1660 – just 6 years before the Great Fire of London – and it contains many gems. In the introduction he talks about the way that problems often seem just too difficult. We don't know which way to turn. Then he has some practical advice. He says, break it down: start with the bit that is simplest and clearest and move on from there. If you get stuck again, pause, and repeat: look for the next bit that you can actually do something about – and then you'll be able to move forward.

Now, Lent often seems to come out of the blue. All of a sudden we are supposed to turn the spotlight on our sins and spend six weeks doing some serious house-cleaning so that we are all sparkling bright for Easter. And that doesn't seem to match reality. For many of us, we get to the end of Lent thinking we're in pretty much the same place as we were before!

Now let's put those thoughts together with today's readings. We expect to hear the account of Jesus in the wilderness for those forty days and nights and the temptations that he has to face. In other words, we expect to be straight into the thick of sin and distortion. But today is different. Our Gospel is from Mark – as we know the briefest of the Gospels – and Mark gives us a vivid picture. In just one sentence he says, "He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him." Everything is there but simplified and clarified. There are few details. But something really important emerges. He was there in the wilderness; Satan tempted him; he was with the wild beasts; and angels waited on him. Do you see how putting it like that makes the whole forty days and nights seem more like an extended stay in an all-inclusive resort with some extreme activities thrown in? But what matters is the balance. Yes, there is hardship and temptation – but the angels are there too.

This ties in with the picture from our first reading. If this week is all about sin and temptation why do we hear of the rainbow and God fixing his covenant with Noah and his descendants? Now we are back with Jeremy Taylor. We shall never be able to deal with the sin in us and make progress when we are just focusing on the tangle of this life. God's desire for creation; God's love for each of us is what simplifies and clarifies the mess. 'In your light shall we see light,' says the Psalmist and today's readings remind us of the light that already shines on us and holds us.