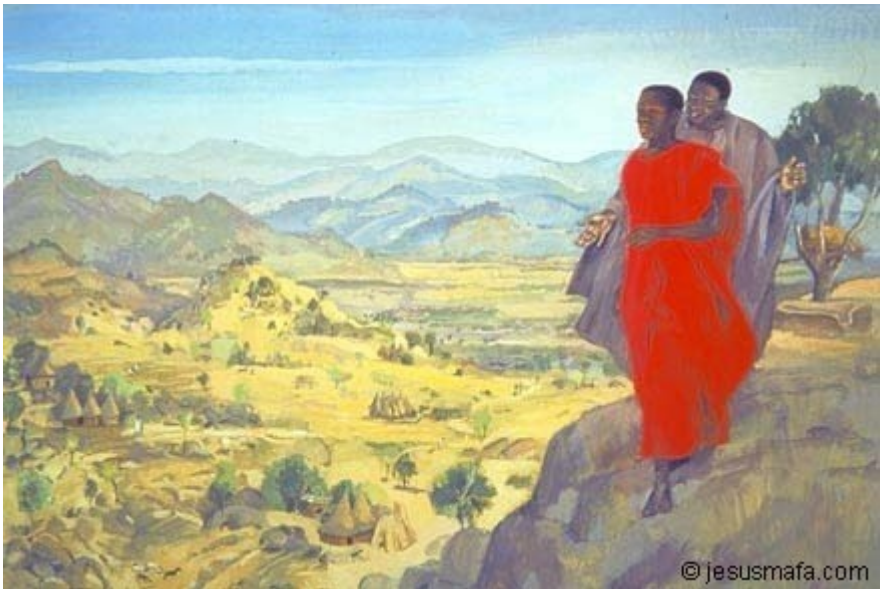


St Swithun's Church Family

Lent 1

Sharing together in Spirit



Sunday 21st February 2021

Faith, Hope and Love

*Please use this booklet to **worship with us** on zoom at 10am – or read through this service knowing that we are joining our prayers together in Spirit.*

Create a sacred space – if possible gather a candle and a cross if you can find them. The children might like to use the Sunday school resources provided by Izzy.

In addition we will be audio recording today's sermon which will be uploaded to the website www.saintswithuns.org.uk

There are various prayer resources and other things to look at on the website – if you have any feedback or anything to share please let me know.

Giving - if you usually give your collection on a Sunday morning in cash, and you are able to, please put this aside each week to bring to church when you are next able to. Even better would be to set up your giving online ('Saint Swithun's PCC' ; 60-05-11 ; 16126718 ; NatWest Bank) if you haven't already done this.

You might like to enhance your worship by singing or listening to a hymn or a song at various points – I have a few suggestions below – you tube is a great resource...

Praise to the holiest

<https://youtu.be/kpHUYwHEstK>

Deep Peace

<https://youtu.be/GAULvPUcQQI>

Blessed assurance

<https://youtu.be/Sli0N4THnmE>

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Introduction

Today is the first Sunday of Lent and we hear about Jesus in the wilderness being tempted and helped by the angels.

As we come to worship today we ask God and God's angels to help us in our own wilderness experiences – those we find ourselves in and the intended disciplines to help us to become closer to God.

The Gathering

The Greeting

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

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

And also with you

Prayer of preparation

Jesus our brother,
desert dweller,
guide and friend.

We come together as a church family
in this time of Lent,
in our wilderness season.

We offer to you now:
our time
our action
our love
our lives.
Amen



Saying sorry - prayers of penitence

Let us say sorry to God

Talk to God about the things you are sorry about so that you can restore your relationship with God, with others and yourself...

Sorry ...

When things get on top of us.

When we walk on by.

When we turn up the volume.

When we ignore the things that we should have done.

Loving God forgive us;

Guide us with your love.

Sorry ...

When we fill our lives with distractions.

When we consume more than we need.

When we abuse our environment.

When we stop caring how our actions affect others.

Loving God forgive us;

Guide us with your love.

Sorry ...

When we are driven by our insecurities

When we are fearful and have no trust.

When we think we are better than others.

When we judge ourselves and others harshly.

Loving God forgive us;

Guide us with your love.

We are forgiven

God forgives me/you.

Forgive others.

Forgive yourself.

Be at peace.

Amen.



The 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

The Liturgy of the Word

The Gospel Reading *Mark 1: 9-15*

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

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.'

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



Sermon *Richard Evans*

It is the first Sunday of Lent. We have just started on a journey that will take us over 6 weeks and lead us to Easter Sunday. My grandfather used to say that anyone who was particularly miserable had “a face as long as Lent”.

The idea of Lent being a long struggle; a time for tough discipline; perhaps a bit of self-denial; giving things up for Lent... these ideas conjure up a traditional view of this time in the church calendar.

More recently, people have begun to talk about not just giving up things for Lent but taking up something: an activity or practice that you start doing and keep going through the time of Lent that will make something positive of the season.

What have you decided to do this Lent?

What are you hoping that the experience of Lent will bring to your faith-life?

Today in our reading we heard about the story behind Lent.

Last week, we heard about the bizarre events of the transfiguration of Jesus. Do you remember that we heard the words from heaven: “This is my son, the beloved...”? We recalled another time when a voice from heaven described Jesus as “beloved” and this is where we start today’s reading; Jesus’ baptism in the river Jordan. This was the very start of the story of Jesus’ ministry and we are reading about it in the Gospel of Mark.

Mark’s Gospel is the earliest of the written records of Jesus’ life that we have in our Bible and it is action-packed. Mark doesn’t hang about or give lots of detail. His story of Jesus is full of movement and excitement and you get the impression that the spare detail is the very least Mark wants to give us to get the point across.

So here we are. Jesus, God’s beloved is baptised, the story is under way and “immediately” Mark tells us, “immediately the Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness”.

What picture does “wilderness” conjure up for you?

A barren desert, perhaps. A lonely and forbidding place where it is difficult to live comfortably. These days, the word wilderness is often used of a remote, unspoiled and beautiful place. But you wouldn't necessarily want to live there or be there on your own. God's beloved son immediately he started his ministry encountered the wilderness. Being beloved of God does not mean that we will avoid times when we find ourselves in a lonely and forbidding place.



Jesus was there for a long time. Forty days we are told, and this is where we get the idea of forty days for Lent.

For many people, this Lent will indeed be a hard and challenging time in their lives. They are no less loved by God.

For Jesus, the wilderness was definitely a tough time, struggling with temptations. It is as if Mark is describing the start of his mission against the forces of evil in the world. It is a struggle that takes place in loneliness and isolation.

Being beloved of God does not mean that we will avoid times when we feel alone and struggling.

Can you identify with this sort of experience? We all know what this feels like.

I am not saying that we need to make a wilderness time for ourselves in Lent. Wilderness times will come without us creating them. During Lent, the point is not that we need to make things difficult for their own sake. I think as we remember Jesus' 40 days of wilderness living we can find a way to focus in a new way and to discover what it is that is at the heart of our faith.

In the other Gospels, we hear details of Jesus' temptations. But here in Mark, the only other detail we have is that Jesus was waited upon by angels.



Have you found that there have been angels, messengers from God, to help you when you have faced times in the wilderness?

As we take our journey through Lent, where might we find help from God?

What angels will we look out for so that our Lent is blessed and we come close to God?

If we think of our Lent journey as a way to get away from distractions and find out for ourselves about the essence of our faith, what angels might we find to help us on the way?

At the end of the time in the desert, we read that Jesus came to Galilee and began to tell people good news. "It is time" is roughly what he said. Time for a new start. Time to really begin to find out what life with God is all about.

Our Covid year has been as long a wilderness journey as any of us could have imagined. For many this year has been unbearably hard.

Perhaps your Lent this year is a healing time. A time for God to restore you and for the angels to minister to you.



Or perhaps some challenges are necessary for us this Lent. Some disciplines to help us refocus on the essence of our faith. The angels are there for all of us however we need to approach Lent this year.

By the time we come to Easter Sunday, even if we might find it hard to believe that God counts us as “beloved”; as beloved as Jesus, I pray that we will all have found our loving God to be closer than we could have imagined.

It is time for a new start. Amen

Profession of Faith

We remember that we are joined together as a family however physically distant we have to be at the moment...

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.
We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.
We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers

Let us pray to God.

Think about our church – our family at St Swithun’s and our wider church family. Name those things we need to pray for...

God of compassion; **In your mercy heal us**

Think about our wider world and all of our global neighbours. Name countries and people you know or have heard of who need our prayers...

God of compassion; **In your mercy heal us**

Think about our local community in Hither Green. Name your concerns and hopes for our local area...

God of compassion; **In your mercy heal us**

Think about all those who are in need or distress. Name those who need your prayers. Name the people who have asked for our prayers... Fran and family, Lamar, Maureen, Karen, Paulette and their families, Andy and family, Philbert and family, Catherine and Alfrina and family, Betty, Canon Richard, Martin, Rossy and family, Kevin, Gwen, Pamela, Neil, Debbie, Elaine and family, Clinton, Francis, Cynthia, Diane, Harold, Ivy, Sean, Taneisha, Talabi, Susan, Edith, Vanda, Lorna, Ena and Stephen.

God of compassion; **In your mercy heal us**

Think about those who have died – name your loved ones, those who have died from coronavirus, those who you know. Name the people who have died recently Carl, Gloria, Alan, Joseph, Sydney, Simone and John.

Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord

And let light perpetual shine upon them

Merciful God

**Accept these prayers,
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.**

Amen.

The Prayer Jesus taught us

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name;

thy kingdom come;

thy will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,

the power and the glory,

for ever and ever.

Amen.

The Peace

God has called us to live in peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Spend some time wishing peace to our family our neighbours and our church family – is there someone who you could make contact with to share God's peace?

Notices

- Lent study 4th March via zoom 7-8pm
- PCC meeting 4th March via zoom 8-9pm
- We will let you know about our return to the church building following the PCC meeting on March 4th and further national news about lockdown easing...
- Happy Birthday to all those who have a birthday



Dismissal and Blessing

The Blessing

Loving God,
Mother and Father of us all,
Bless us as we struggle to live within your harmony.
Enable us that our lives may sing your praises.
Encourage us to journey through any temptations
which take us away from your love.
And the blessing of God:
Creator, Redeemer, Spirit
be with us always.
Amen.

The Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ.
Amen.

