

Swaythling Parish

Sunday 21 February 2021

First Sunday of Lent

Welcome

Below is a service sheet for you to use at home. You can also find our Sunday morning reflection on YouTube channel, available at 10am on Sunday, (and afterwards). Please search for "Swaythling Parish" on YouTube to find and view it.

*If we can support you in any way at the present time, or you would just like to chat, do please get in touch: 023 8055 4231
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Introduction from Rev Peter Dockree

Welcome to our service today, however you are joining us. This Sunday is the first Sunday of lent, a time to reflect, a time when we are invited to assess again where we are as people and where we are with God. Bruce will lay down a challenge and invitation to us later, as he reflects on Noah, and then on Jesus in the wilderness.

Before we go further lets just acknowledge the goodness that is around us, the love that is given to us, and the hope that is held out to us all. Let's give thanks for it all now.

Greeting

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

And also with you.

The Lord be with you,

And also with you

Prayer of Confession

When I was in my teenage years, I used to be always told off for saying sorry too much. My friends even made a sorry box for me, so I would put some money in the box every time I said the word. Sorry can flow off our lips too easily, as it did in my teenage years for me (and still does sometimes), and sometimes it can be the hardest word to find.

The sorry we are invited to give to God is one that comes from a place that is honest and real, from a place of knowing we are loved.

For the times when we feel sorry for things that we do not need to.

Lord have mercy, **Lord have mercy**
For the things we hold too tight and dare not admit to ourselves, others and to you Lord.

Christ have mercy, **Christ have mercy**
For the way we treat our fellow human beings.

Lord have mercy, **Lord have mercy.**

May the God of love
Bring us back to himself,
Forgive us our sins,
and assure us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **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.

Hymn: Lead us heavenly Father lead us

1. Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us
O'er the world's tempestuous sea;
Guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
For we have no help but Thee;
Yet possessing every blessing
If our God our Father be.
2. Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us;
All our weakness Thou dost know;
Thou didst tread this earth before us,
Thou didst feel its keenest woe;
Lone and dreary, faint and weary,
Through the desert Thou didst go.
3. Spirit of our God, descending,
Fill our hearts with heavenly joy,
Love with every passion blending,
Pleasure that can never cloy;
Thus provided, pardoned, guided,
Nothing can our peace destroy.

James Edmeston (1821)

Readings

Genesis 9: 8-17

When the flood is over, God gives the rainbow as a sign of his promise never to destroy the earth again.

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.'

Mark 1: 9-15

Jesus is affirmed at his baptism by the words of God the Father, and the gift of the Spirit, and after a period of preparation goes public with his proclamation of the Kingdom of God.

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.

A Reflection by Canon Rev Bruce Hartnell

In the parish of Knowl Hill I counted 'Moses' as a parishioner and in the parish of Sholing 'Noah'. Pretty distinguished, wouldn't you say? Moses' surname was Hill and so everyone called him 'Mossy Hill'. Noah had a great-grandfather of exactly the same name as himself, with a headstone in Sholing churchyard. The living Noah was a fireman, six-foot five and ideal for climbing a long ladder to fix our church steeple.

In identifying the real significance of key people, the gospel writers often refer to great names of yesteryear. So John the Baptist is shown wearing the outfit of Elijah. Today a new Noah is set before us, if we have eyes to see.

St Mark has brought Jesus from his obscure home town of Nazareth to the banks of the Jordan where he submits humbly to baptism by John, along with the rest of the crowd. All pretty ordinary for those days. Suddenly the mood is transformed as the heavens are torn apart and the Spirit descends like a dove. A voice declares that Jesus is God's Son.

The first reading today was about the Flood. The splendidly named St Gregory Thaumaturgus connects Flood and Baptism when he claims that the Father is pointing Jesus out as the new Noah right there in the Jordan

by sending the Spirit in the form of a dove. Actually, Jesus is the maker of Noah and, what Gregory calls, 'the good pilot of the nature which is in shipwreck'.

The glory of the new Noah is greater than the old. By virtue of obedience in building the ark, Noah preserved his own life and that of his companions. By contrast, the obedience of the New Noah (otherwise known as Jesus) will cost him his life in order that the shipwrecked world may be piloted to resurrection life.

But Mark moves swiftly on. No sooner has the Spirit descended as a dove on Jesus than that same Spirit drives him immediately into the wilderness. His time of trial echoes what faces all humanity. We are most vulnerable to pride when God has worked most powerfully through us. Think of Peter coming up with the truth about Jesus being the Messiah and then almost at once being rebuked for resisting Jesus' teaching about the Cross and called 'Satan', Tempter.

All of us need times of retreat and reflection if we are to respond to the call of God's grace and not let our egos and our pride get in the way. The competitors in the Tokyo Olympics have been training for years to be ready for the ultimate test in Japan – to hone their skills and be in peak condition. Their preparation has called for constantly careful dieting, realistic monitoring of stresses and strains and

singleness of purpose. While I am not planning to enter for any event, the race that is set before us is even more important. It is our onward journey to God.

Jesus is not retreating into the wilderness to make a film about scorpions and get away from the challenges of daily life but as an essential preparation for struggles ahead. The wild beasts mentioned around him refer back to the prophets who used this expression to mean the oppressive leaders of their time. With the arrest of John, Mark reminds us of the unjust rulers of Jesus' day who had very real power and presented a powerful threat. The Gospel will carry Jesus, undeviating in his plotted route, into the conflict's centre and beyond, as his charted course is made plain.

To be faithful to our Captain we must allow him into our hearts to confront our illusions and despairs and to heal us of all that might separate us from him.

Well now, shipmates, are we ready to cast off?

Prayers

Let us pray for our world, our community and those in need around us. You may wish to light some candles as you pray.

For the moments of brokenness and despair. For the moments of light and possibility. For the people battling to survive either physically or emotionally. For those who fear a "return to normal".

For places of darkness and places of light, in own country and across the world. For politicians and those who would govern us. For the national church and the challenges it faces to be your hands and feet.

For the season of lent, its opportunities and its challenges.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

Hymn: Will you come and follow me?

I Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?

- 2 Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?
- 3 Will you let the blinded see
if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free
and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean
and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean
in you and you in me?
- 4 Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?
- 5 Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

Closing Blessing

Thank you to everyone for worshipping with us today.

May this season be for you a time to face
the things that we struggle to face,
A time to meet God and to learn afresh
how we may follow God.
A time to count our blessings, and
experience the power of grace.

May the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be among us and remain with us always.

Amen

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