

We often talk about God's Reign in human terms – what it means for us, how it affects us.

This first Sunday in Lent, though, at the start of our penitent journey of preparation for Holy Week and Easter, we are invited to expand our vision of God's Reign and recognise that it embraces all of creation, and that it whispers of a connectedness between all things that, once we embrace it, is truly world-changing. May our worship and our penitence open our eyes to the connectedness of all creation.



INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Genesis 9 : 8-17

During Lent this year we hear from Israel's books of the Law those passages which tell of the covenants that bind God and his people together. After the great flood, Noah and his family set out on God's new beginning for humanity, under a covenant promising God's new blessing to all creation.

The Psalm - Psalm 25: 1-9

A plea for God to be merciful and to not remember the sinfulness of the psalmist's youth, but to teach the psalmist God's ways and deliver him from his enemies.

1 Peter 3 : 18-22

The writer explains the symbolic meaning of Noah and the flood water. Through the water used in Christian baptism everyone is brought to God's safety, because Christ has died, Christ is risen, and the power of his resurrection is present for us.

Mark 1 : 9-15

This Sunday's readings all have the powerful image of salvation through water. We hear now Mark's account of the baptism of Jesus, then Our Lord's call to repent and believe his good news. So begins our Lenten preparation, for those to be baptised at Easter, and for us all to reaffirm our baptismal covenant promises.

Click here to view the readings

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Genesis%209:%208-17%0Acw%20Psalm%2025:%201-9%0A1%20Peter%203:%2018-22%0AMark%201:%209-15

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

O Lord,
who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights;
Give us grace to use such abstinence,
that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit,
we may ever obey thy godly motions
in righteousness, and true holiness,
to thy honour and glory,
who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, world without end.

Collect Two

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 our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Presider or deacon

God made a covenant with Noah and set a rainbow in the clouds. Let us pray for all the descendants of Noah, and especially for those preparing for baptism.

Deacon or other leader

For the holy catholic church throughout the world, sharing the death and resurrection of Christ.

Lord, have mercy.

For N our bishop, for presbyters and deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

Lord, have mercy.

For NN our catechumen(s) and NN their sponsors(s).

Lord, have mercy.

For all the peoples of the earth who share God's covenant of peace.

Lord, have mercy.

For all who are oppressed, afflicted, or in need.

Lord, have mercy.

For the dying and the dead.

Lord, have mercy.

For our families, friends, and companions, and for all those we love.

Lord, have mercy.

Remembering N, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. To you, O Lord.

Presider

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who saved us from the flood and brought us through the wilderness. Hear our prayers for all peoples. Receive sons and daughters into your family, wash them in the waters of new life, and feed them with your bread and wine; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

P

O holy and most merciful God, by Your Word You created a perfect world. By man's fall in the Garden of Eden, that perfect world was ruined. Strengthen our faith by Your Spirit that as we must live in this sinful world, we may not lose hope, but continue to focus on the One who has crushed the serpent's head with His perfect life, innocent death, and victorious resurrection. Lord, in Your mercy,

C

hear our prayer.

P

O Gracious Father, You know how the tempter tries to allure and seduce us into gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature. In the midst of temptation, make us patient and enduring. Bring to remembrance the flood of our baptism, where You washed away all of our sins and evil desires and recreated us to live before You with righteousness and purity forever. Deliver us from all temptation and guide us by Your fatherly hand to live as Your redeemed children. Lord, in Your mercy,

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C
hear our prayer.

P
Heavenly Father, we pray for all who labour in their various callings. Even when the task is not pleasurable, give them joy as they labour to serve their neighbours. Protect those who are not employed and who are seeking employment. Relieve them from any anxiety, and remind them that You continue to provide all that they need to support this body and life. According to Your good and perfect plan, may they find suitable and fulfilling employment and receive just payment for their labour. Lord, in Your mercy,

C
hear our prayer.

P
Lord of power and might, abide with the leaders of our land. Remind them that their responsibility for government comes from You so that their decisions will be made according to Your Word. Especially guide our government and politicians and all of our legislators and judges. Lord, in Your mercy,

C
hear our prayer.

P
Lord of the nations, quell the military strife between nations. Ease political tensions, and bring peace to warring nations of the world so that we may live together in harmony. Defeat the plans of all those who stir up violence and strife. Support those who make difficult military decisions in an effort to defend our country. Keep safe our military as they enter dangerous situations. Give all military personnel courage and loyalty that they may serve with integrity and honour. Lord, in Your mercy,

C
hear our prayer.

P
O Father of all mercies and God of all comfort, look with favour upon all those who are sick, [especially _____]. Cheer them by Your Word of pardon and peace. Comfort them with Your forgiveness. Visit them with Your Spirit so that they may lift up their hearts from the physical sufferings of this world to the hope of glory that shall be revealed to them. Abide with those who mourn the death of loved ones, [especially _____]. In the midst of their sadness, give them the joy of Your grace in Jesus Christ. Lord, in Your mercy,

C
hear our prayer.

P
O Lord God, grant Your Spirit to those who come to the Lord's table this day. United in the fellowship of faith confessed at this altar/table, may all who eat and drink the body and

blood of Jesus do so in sincere repentance and firm faith and, receiving the precious gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation, and giving thanks to You for Your wondrous mercy. Lord, in Your mercy,

C
hear our prayer.

P
Into Your hands, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C
Amen.

POST COMMUNION

Lord God,
you renew us with the living bread from heaven.
Nourish our faith,
increase our hope,
strengthen our love,
and enable us to live by every word
that proceeds from out of your mouth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

God of wilderness and water,
your Son was baptized and tempted as we are.
Guide us through this season,
that we may not avoid struggle,
but open ourselves to blessing,
through the cleansing depths of repentance
and the heaven-rending words of the Spirit. Amen.

Artist of souls,
you sculpted a people for yourself
out of the rocks of wilderness and fasting.
Help us as we take up your invitation to prayer and simplicity,
that the discipline of these forty days
may sharpen our hunger for the feast of your holy friendship,
and whet our thirst for the living water you offer
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

God of the covenant,
in the glory of the cross

your Son embraced the power of death
and broke its hold over your people.
In this time of repentance,
draw all people to yourself,
that we who confess Jesus as Lord
may put aside the deeds of death
and accept the life of your kingdom. Amen.

God of the living,
through baptism we pass from the shadow of death
to the light of the resurrection.
Remain with us and give us hope
that, rejoicing in the gift of the Spirit
who gives life to our mortal flesh,
we may be clothed with the garment of immortality,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Beloved friends, in this season of repentance and healing,
we accept God's invitation to be ever-mindful of the needs of others,
offering our prayers on behalf of God's community in the church and the world.
Fill us with your strength
to resist the seductions of our foolish desires
and the tempter's vain delights,
that we may walk in obedience and righteousness,
rejoicing in you with an upright heart. Amen.

God of our salvation,
your bow in the clouds
proclaims your covenant with every living creature.
Teach us your paths and lead us in your truth,
that by your Holy Spirit,
we may remember our baptismal vows
and be keepers of your trust with earth and its inhabitants. Amen.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

Genesis 9:8-17:

- One of God's first covenants established with God's people - never again to destroy the earth and its people as God did in the flood. What other covenants does God make with humans?
- Have you ever made a personal covenant with God? Have you kept your part of the promise? Has God?

- The rainbow is a symbol of a promise. Symbols are important reminders of promise
- we use rings, for example, as symbols of promises made in marriage. What symbols are important reminders in your own life?
- Have you seen many rainbows? When I see them, I am always filled with joy, they are so rare and precious. How do they make you feel? Do you remember God's promise when you see them?

Psalm 25:1-10:

- The psalmist mentions shame several times - his shame, the shame of those obedient to God, shame he hopes is put on others by God. Shame is a powerful emotion, a powerful motivator, a powerful weapon of oppression. Of what are you ashamed in yourself? In others? How do you shame others? Does God shame us?
- "Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions" - Many people probably echo the psalmists worries - will be judged by all the things we did when we didn't know any better? I think we can trust in God's abundant grace, who calls us into a more mature discipleship. Indeed, verses 8 and 9 talk about God as a teacher, The One who instructs us. How have you learned/grown in your faith over the years? Are you a mature disciple? Or an early student?

1 Peter 3:18-22:

- Peter clings to a New Testament dualism between flesh and spirit. Sometimes, thinking of these separate spheres is helpful, but sometimes New Testament writers make it seem as though everything flesh - flesh God created - is bad. What do you think? How do we nurture our spirits without negating the temple/bodies in which we live?
- Note the connection in verse 20 to the Genesis reading for today, and the connection in verse 21 to the gospel lesson about baptism.
- The author has a unique description of baptism: not a removal of dirtiness, but an appeal to God for a "good conscience." This emphasizes personal responsibility and repentance without emphasizing guilt/unworthiness/original sin. It leaves out God's initiative of grace to us, but I like the way the Peter describe his view.

Mark 1:9-15:

- We start with a review of the baptism of Jesus - short and sweet in Mark. Make sure you compare Mark's recording of this scene (remember Mark is the earliest gospel written) with the accounts in the other gospels. In Mark, God speaks directly to Jesus: You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased. Other accounts

have God saying This is my Son. I prefer Mark's recording - God speaking directly to God's child.

- This passage highlights Mark's love of brevity - where the temptation lasts several verses with many details in Luke and Matthew, with a recorded conversation between Jesus and Satan, Mark sees no need for such an account, simply recording that Jesus was tempted for 40 days, driven into the wilderness by the Spirit. What do you make Mark's account? What does his brief style say about what is most important to him about Jesus' temptation?
- Mark again emphasizes that for Jesus, the good news is: "the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe." Do you see this as good news? Why was it so important for Jesus to tell this?

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

Water – in the flood and in the baptism of Jesus and of Christ's followers – is the striking image at the heart of this first week in Lent. But, along with it comes God's promise of restoration, of grace and of the united creation toward which God is working. In the Noah story, the promise that God will not again destroy the earth with a flood is freely given, not just to Noah and the human beings, but to the whole of creation. In Peter's letter, Christ's work in saving both the living and the "spirits in prison" from Noah's time, is explained, with baptism as the sign of our salvation. Importantly, though, Christ's place as ruler of all "angels, authorities and powers" is also proclaimed here – indicating again, the unity that comes through God's grace. In the Psalm the writer expresses trust in the God who restores and protects and who leads the psalmist in God's ways of life. Finally, in the Gospel, we return to the account of Christ's baptism (which we last encountered in the first week of Epiphany on Baptism of Christ Sunday), but now, the temptation narrative is included, along with the start of Jesus' ministry. Here again, God's affirmation of Jesus, along with the baptism experience, is a highlight, leading on to God's sustaining of Christ in the wilderness. Here, too, a vision of a united creation is offered, as we read that Jesus was cared for by angels and wild animals.

If we are to bring all of these threads together, we find a simple, but transforming message coming through. The act of baptism, which is a sign of our welcome into God's community of grace and salvation, embraces and includes all of creation. And, as all of creation is brought together, so we are all called to be agents of God's grace and sustenance and life to one another. The mission of Christ, of which his baptism was the start, proclaims the Reign of God in which all creation, not just human beings, are included and restored. As we embrace the Lenten fast and the journey of repentance, it is important that the scope of God's saving work be remembered, for ultimately our spiritual work must lead us to be better participants in this work.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: There is much that we, as global citizens, need to repent of in this Lenten season. The increasing fragmentation of our world along religious, political, economic and racial lines, and the disconnect between humanity and the rest of creation

are all destructive forces that have no need to exist. Somehow we need to learn that we are all welcomed into the community of God's grace and love, and that our wellbeing depends on us recognising our connectedness. Certainly, when we place Christ's message of the availability of God's Reign alongside the events of his baptism and temptation, we cannot help but recognise that his message was inclusive of all of humanity, but also of all of creation. The Lenten disciplines are all useful ways for us to re-orient our lives around God's Reign, and live out the truth of our connectedness. Fasting teaches us to "live simply so that others may simply live" and provides a discipline of restraint that could potentially keep us from over-consumption of the world's resources, and from the fight for resources that so often leads to war and violence. Giving – of time, abilities, and resources – teaches us generosity and sharing, and grows compassion and thankfulness, which strengthen our ability to be peaceful, loving, and welcoming people. Prayer teaches us that our quest for power is futile, that we cannot be our own gods, and that the most effective power is that which is shared and given away. If we will allow these disciplines, and the Lenten vision of a unified creation, to shape our lives, this journey can transform us into true participants in God's saving mission, and, through us, help to bring some measure of peace and healing to our communities and our world.

LOCAL APPLICATION: As local communities and as individuals we have two choices when it comes to how we will live. The first is to keep ourselves separate from those who are different from us, from our environment, and from the big issues that face our world. The second is to "think globally, but act locally," recognising that what we do affects others, and what happens to others happens to us. It takes deliberate work to shift our awareness away from our own perspectives and concerns to our connectedness with all of creation, but it's a life-giving shift to make. When we begin to live as citizens of God's interconnected Reign, we start to experience the healing that comes from embracing our neighbours as friends, and from caring for our world and its creatures as companion recipients of God's grace. Once this vision has settled into our souls, we begin to recognise that the smallest of acts can have massive healing consequences. We begin to recognise that small acts of care and generosity contribute to world peace. We discover that kindness expressed in word, action – or even just a smile – makes our world safer. We start to find that caring for our corner of the earth can help to address issues of climate change, and that learning simplicity can help in reducing our over-consumption. It's the small acts, connected and shared, that can have a huge impact – which is why Jesus preached his message to small groups, and called individuals to follow – all of which ultimately resulted in a global community numbering in the billions which could, if we choose it, make a massive difference in helping to heal our world.

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Jesus and the temptations - Ministry Depot - Get by the advert for visuals and its a fairly straightforward expository sermon on the temptations of Jesus which is presented in a well organised manner. It concludes - "The purpose of the Bible passage today is to encourage us to resist temptation, the way that Jesus resisted temptation. The purpose of this Biblical text is not to say that there are a variety of temptations for each one of us. The purpose is not

to suggest we are to put ourselves in situations where we will be tempted innumerable times so that we finally cave into the temptation.

"The purpose of this Biblical story today is for us to be strong. Be strong my son. Be strong my daughter. Be strong! Just as the temptation is not theoretical and just as the temptations we face are not hypothetical, so also the strength of God to resist temptation is not hypothetical, the strength of God is not imaginary, the resources of God are not illusionary. God does empower us with the Holy Spirit, the divine words living inside of us, and the Indwelling Presence, so that we too can resist the real temptations in our lives as well. Amen."

<http://ministrydepot.com/sermons/2009/02/mark-1-9-15-lent-1-jesus-and-the-temptations/>

Enemies - Day 1 - When we were called to the observance of a Holy Lent last Wednesday, we were in many respects called to enter the wilderness as a preparation for Easter. While St. Mark tells us very little about Jesus' time in the wilderness except that he was tempted or tested by Satan, he was with the wild beasts and was waited on by angels, the portion of the twenty-fifth psalm appointed for today gives us many more clues as to what we can expect in the weeks to come.

The psalmist begs God for leadership in the paths of righteousness, and in doing so recalls not only the stories of Yahweh leading the people through the pillars of cloud and fire in Exodus, but also, more generally, recalls the whole formation of Israel as a people. It was in the wilderness that they were given identity as a gracious gift in the granting of the Torah at Sinai (Exod. 19:16-20:21). The Lord told them that they were not like other people but had a distinct identity. And those people were taught the paths of righteousness in the trials and tribulations, the testing and the teaching for forty wilderness years before they were able to enter the Promised Land.

So what are we going to learn about the paths of righteousness in the wilderness time of this Lent?

<http://day1.org/1201-enemies>

Mark's insight for Lent on Jesus - Episcopal sermon - Scroll down to Lent 1

In calling ourselves Christians, Children of God, we acknowledge that God has called us, we acknowledge the pulling at our cores: to be more, to be God's, to live into our calling. And discernment is how we figure out what that looks like. It is the way we ask ourselves, "How do I live as a child of God?"

In today's gospel we hear a three-part story of Jesus' call and his response. For Mark, this is the beginning of the story of Jesus.

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2009/03/?cat=7>

Sermon for the First Sunday in Lent - Day 1 - "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." -- Mark 1:15

It's a humble journey, the one we begin today. This first Sunday in Lent. It's oh, so humble, so modest, so unassuming, and it begins so unremarkably, unlike other journeys in our lives, journeys that start off with the hurrah of loaded suitcases, satchels filled with degrees or wedding licenses or retirement gifts, and people waving at us as the car speeds up.

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But it's a humble, humble journey we begin today. This Jesus-journey humble? Really? The scripture just read seems pretty sensational. It starts, after all, with a baptism featuring an other-worldly voice. And then there's the trek through the wilderness littered by Satan and wild beasts, then "cleaned up" by angels.

And if that's not enough, the passage ends with a powerful message booming out from the Super Hero Jesus, who strides into Galilee to change the world.

http://day1.org/980-sermon_for_the_first_sunday_in_lent

Noah - an excerpt from Frederick Buechner's book "*Beyond Words*."

Noah could never forget the first time-how little by little the waters had risen, first just spreading in over the kitchen linoleum and trickling down the cellar stairs, but eventually floating newspapers and family photographs off tables and peeling wallpaper off walls until people were driven to the rooftops, where they sat wrapped in blankets with their transistor radios on their laps looking up for a break in the clouds and reassuring each other that this must be the clearing shower at last. He remembered the animals he'd had to leave behind-the old sow with her flaxen lashes squealing on top of a hen house as the ripples lapped at her trotters, the elephants awash up to their hips, a marmalade cat with one ragged ear clinging to a TV aerial as a pair of parakeets in a wicker cage floated by over what had once been the elementary school gym...

Its worth reading even for the ending!

<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-noah>

CHILDREN

The Children's Sermon - on Mark 1: 9 - 15. Simple and straightforward.

<http://thechildrenssermon.com/mark1g.html>

[Worshiping with Children](#), Lent 1B, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown, 2015.

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/year-b-first-sunday-in-lent-february-22.html>

["Storypath Lectionary Links: Connecting Children's Literature with our Faith Story."](#)

February 8, 2015, Union Presbyterian Seminary.

<http://storypath.upsem.edu/lectionary-links-sunday-february-22-2015/>

["Sermon of the Week,"](#) / ["Mensajes para ninos."](#) Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles.

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[For The Beauty Of The Earth](#)
[Praise To The Lord, The Almighty](#)
[O God Our Help In Ages Past](#)

The First Sunday in Lent YEAR B 22nd Feb 2015

[Lead Us, Heavenly Father, Lead Us](#)

[Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah](#)

[When Jesus Came To Jordan](#)

[Indescribable](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Creation's King](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Creator King](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Your Word](#)

Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to churchnewsireland@gmail.com with the message Passwords in the title