



Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney's Lent Course 2024

THE WAY TO THE CROSS

MONDAY 19 FEBRUARY



GOD IS FAITHFUL EVEN WHEN WE WANDER AWAY FROM GOD

Themes in the readings for the First Sunday of Lent are how God is faithful to us and humanity, even and despite us wandering away from God.

In the reading from the Gospel of Mark we read of Jesus' baptism, 40 days in the wilderness and proclamation that the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is arriving (some translations have come near).

This is the first time we meet Jesus in the Gospel of Mark and we meet the adult Jesus. The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the Gospels and does not begin with a Nativity narrative (Luke, Matthew) or connecting Jesus to Creation (John).

In verses 9-11 we hear of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan by John.

We do not know anything about Jesus and John's interactions before this moment in Mark's account and we do not hear of Jesus' reasoning behind being baptised - he is the Son of God and part of the Trinity. Perhaps Jesus wanted to symbolise being part of John's work towards the restoration of humanity getting right with God, that Jesus is Jesus standing in continuity with John and expectation of God's saving grace. In our Baptism liturgy we are called to model our lives on Jesus and baptism is one way to do this - including action following a commitment to a life of faith. When Jesus is baptised the heavens open - are torn apart, something that can not easily be returned to the previous status - showing that everything has and is changing.

Collect for First Sunday of Lent

Almighty God,
whose Son fasted forty
days in the wilderness,
and was tempted as we
are but did not sin,
give us grace to
discipline ourselves in
submission to your
Spirit, that as you
know our weakness so
we may know your
power to save;
through Jesus Christ
our Lord, who lives
and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit,
one God,
now and for ever.
Amen.

Immediately following his baptism Jesus goes to the wilderness – the desert, the place of nothingness. Jesus spends forty days in the wilderness.

Forty is a biblical number – it is the amount of time Moses spent at Mount Sinai (Exodus 24, 34), Elijah spent 40 days wandering in the wilderness to Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19) and Israel’s time of travelling and testing in the wilderness (Deuteronomy). We do not hear the details of what happened but Jesus is tempted by Satan and resists. Jesus is accompanied by wild beasts – perhaps a connection to Adam and the Garden of Eden and angels – Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man. Jesus as fully human and fully divine through navigating the temptations and trials of the wilderness shows he knows what it is to navigate the trials and tribulations of human life,

Following time in the wilderness Jesus starts his earthly ministry – announcing Good News and proclaiming the Kingdom of God is coming.

Mark 1.15 can be seen to summarise the ministry of Jesus in word and deed. Jesus proclaims God’s good news, says that time has been fulfilled, accomplished and something new is happening. Jesus proclaims the Kingdom of God is near, coming, imminent. What might that mean for us, two centuries after Jesus’ walk on earth?

In Mark 1.9–15 we see Jesus acting, responding and proclaiming good news. Jesus shows a path of belief in heart and action in choosing to be baptised. Then Jesus experiences the wilderness that God’s beloved people do, despite perhaps because of being God’s beloved son. We are called to turn and respond to the news of the coming of the Kingdom of God.

In the reading from Genesis we see one of the many promises that God makes with humanity in the Covenant made with Noah. This covenant to not flood the earth again is represented and symbolised by the rainbow. A Covenant is an agreement between two unequal parties that includes solemn assurances and promises.

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

Mark 1.15

Usual Weekly Pattern

Sunday
RCL Eucharist
Readings and Collect

Monday
Delving Deeper into
the Readings

Tuesday
Words from Others
(sacred & secular)

Wednesday
Resources from the
Arts

Thursday
Contemplative Acts

Friday
Personal Reflection
– what this means to
me

Saturday
Acts & Deeds

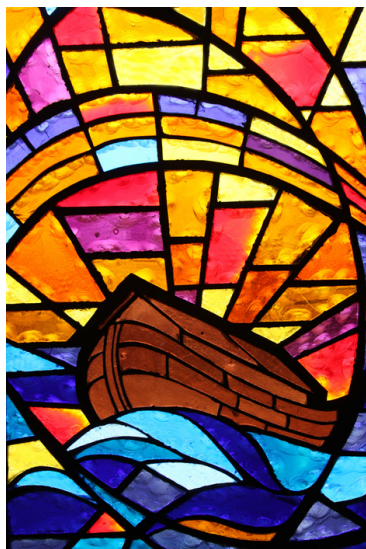
QUESTIONS TO REFLECT

- In the Gospel of Mark we hear of Jesus' baptism and what he did immediately following this. Do you remember your baptism or stories you have been told about your baptism? Perhaps you remember confirmation or re-affirming your baptism vows - how did you react immediately following this event?



- How does your baptism impact your actions today? You may wish to look at the Baptismal promises and reflect how you honour these in this Lenten season.

- Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness whilst Satan tempted him. What are temptations in your life that draw you away from God? How might you address these during Lent assured by the fact that God is always with us and never deserts us.
- What does the phrase 'God's Kingdom is arriving' or 'the Kingdom of God is near' mean to you? How would you describe it to someone in your church or a friend who doesn't share your faith?
- In the reading from Genesis we read of God's covenant with Noah symbolised by the rainbow, what does this promise of God symbolise to you?



“This (*the rainbow*) is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

Genesis 9.17

Eternal God,
the light of the
minds that know
you,
the joy of the
hearts that love
you,
and the strength
of the wills that
serve you:
grant us so to
know you
that we may
truly love you,
so to love you
that we may
truly serve you,
whose service is
perfect freedom;
through Jesus
Christ our Lord.
Amen

*after Augustine
of Hippo (430)*