



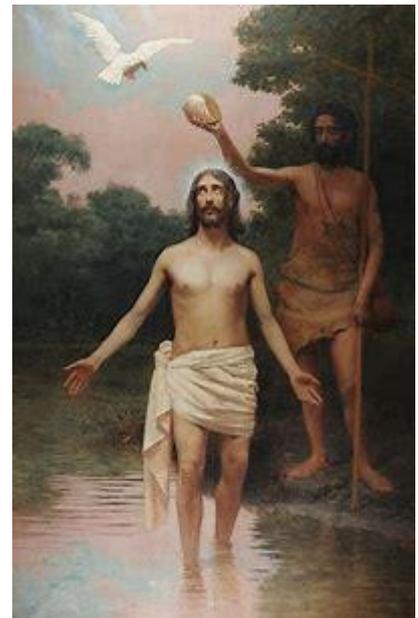
Living churches at the heart of their communities...

St Giles', Durham, St Cuthbert's, Shadforth and St Mary's, Sherburn

**Sunday 21 February 2021
Service of the Word
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



Bible Readings

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.'

Psalm 25. 1-9

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

O my God, in you I trust;

do not let me be put to shame;

do not let my enemies exult over me.

Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;

let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

Make me to know your ways, O Lord;

teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth, and teach me,

for you are the God of my salvation;

for you I wait all day long.

Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;

according to your steadfast love remember me,

for your goodness' sake, O Lord!

Good and upright is the Lord;

therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

He leads the humble in what is right,

and teaches the humble his way.

Mark 1. 9-15

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.'

Readings for next week – Second Sunday of Lent:

Genesis 17. 1-7; Psalm 22. 23-end; Romans 4. 13-end; Mark 8. 31-end

Reflection: Mark 1. 9-15

The passage we are looking at helps us see that on one level Jesus is every bit like one of us. He had a home in Nazareth, with parents and brothers and sisters. He had a trade too, working with his father. Like others, he was baptised by John in the waters of the river Jordan – and he knew what it was to be tempted to sin. And he preached a message about the kingdom of God that was coming and so urged the people, as any preacher would who believed the kingdom of God was coming, to repent and believe in the good news of the kingdom.

Have you ever wondered how Jesus came to understand that he had a very special place and role in the work of God and in the coming of the kingdom? I think Jesus was 'ordinary' (that's certainly how other people regarded him at times) and at first did not have any special knowledge that he was God's Son. I suspect he came to understand his special identity, role, and tasks gradually over time. And importantly he came to believe with the same need for faith that you and I have. In other words, he lived as much by faith as God would have us live by faith.

An important step in Jesus' journey of faith came when he was baptised. Mark says that as Jesus came up, out of the water, he saw the heavens being torn apart and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And then he heard a voice, "You are my Son, the beloved".

I don't think those words came to him "out of the blue"; I don't think he was like anyone else that day being baptised. I suspect he already had inklings that God had a special role for him and that he had a special calling. The vision of the heavens splitting and the voice he heard reinforced and developed his sense of calling – but he still had to believe it and trust it was God who said – and meant – it! The profound testing that he then went through in the wilderness would have added to his awareness that he was no ordinary person, but someone called by God for a unique role in the salvation of humanity.

So Jesus lived by faith, believing and trusting God as he had a developing sense of the work God was calling him to. At some points Jesus was deeply tested – in the wilderness, in Gethsemane, for example. He trusted God and became, in the words of Hebrews 12:2, "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith". Jesus himself lived a life of faith in the same God in whom we too are to trust. In other words, we are to follow our Lord in a life of faith, learning from the example of his faith.



Rev'd Anthony

Notices

Extract of a letter from Bishops Paul and Sarah:

....as we enter Lent this year don't worry if you are already tired. Instead, pray for eyes to see and hearts to be open to the new life the Lord Jesus will bring to us and our communities. Let the word Lent, the old English word for the spring season, help us each be open to the new life God would bring to us in our weariness. Let us remember again that 'The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary, his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint' (Isaiah 40. 28f). We enter this Lent with hope founded in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Daily Hope phone line: This is a **free** national telephone line which offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of the phone.

The line is available 24 hours a day on 0800 804 8044 and has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind; to provide comfort and spiritual nourishment to the most isolated in our society.

There are also the following free helplines for anyone struggling with loneliness:

- Age UK Befriending Services 0800 678 1602
- Independent Age 0800 319 6789
- The Silver Line 0800 470 8089