

Walking with Christ through Lent

Week 1 (Mon. Mar. 7 – Sat. Mar. 12, 2022)

Opening Prayers

O Lord, open our lips
And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Blessed are you God of compassion and mercy, to you be praise and glory for ever!
As we rejoice in the gift of your saving help, sustain us with your bountiful Spirit
And open our lips to sing your praise, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:
Blessed be God for ever! ¹

The Lord is full of compassion and mercy: O come, let us worship.

Venite

Come, let us sing to the Lord; let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving and raise a loud shout to him with psalms.
For the Lord is a great God, and a great king above all gods.
In his hand are the caverns of the earth, and the heights of the hills are his also.
The sea is his for he made it, and his hands have moulded the dry land.
Come, let us bow down, and bend the knee, and kneel before the Lord our maker.
For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.
Oh, that today you would hearken to his voice!

Reading (See following pages for the Reflection on each Scripture reading)

Monday	Mark 1:1-13
Tuesday	Mark 1:14-28
Wednesday	Mark 1:29-45
Thursday	Mark 2:1-12
Friday	Mark 2:13-22
Saturday	Mark 2:23-3:6

Prayer

Cast your burden upon the Lord; and he will sustain you.

Create in me a clean heart; O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from your presence; and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

Give me the joy of your saving help again; and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

Blessed be the Lord day by day; the God of our salvation, who bears our burdens.

(Personal prayer)

Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world: grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross, we may triumph in the power of his victory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. ¹

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray as our Saviour taught us:

(contemporary)

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.

(traditional)

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.

May God our Redeemer show us compassion and love. Amen.

Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Reflections

After reading the Scripture for the day, in order to prepare to reflect, quiet yourself with a few deep breaths. Then take time to read the passage again, slowly, making note of what stands out for you, and what catches you about Jesus' words or actions. After completing the Reflection, you may wish to write a few notes about your responses to the questions, and/or go for a walk to further ponder your responses.

Monday (Mark 1:1-13)

We're used to reading about John the Baptist and his ministry during Advent, even before we read about Jesus' birth, but he was a contemporary of Jesus, helping to prepare people for Jesus' ministry. Mark describes John's appearance like that of Elijah, a great prophet from ancient times. At the time of Jesus' baptism by John, the Holy Spirit comes upon Jesus and God's voice validates who Jesus is. Newly-anointed and called for ministry, Jesus is then "tested" during his ordeal in the wilderness to prepare him for the ministry to which God calls him.

Can you identify times in your life where, at the beginning of a new vocation, or direction in your life, you underwent a kind of "testing" or trial that ultimately made you more committed and

better equipped to following this new path? Mark tells us that while Jesus was in the wilderness God's messengers looked after him. Can you identify the ways in which you were "sustained" during your time of testing? Give thanks to God for that grace.

Tuesday (Mark 1:14-28)

Jesus begins to call his inner circle of disciples – in this case two pairs of brothers who are fisherman. Jesus calls them by referring to their occupation (fishing) but with an entirely different focus – people instead of fish! In this first visit to the synagogue in his home town (Capernaum) he is confronted by evil power (unclean spirit) over which he exercises his God-given authority.

Imagine the reaction of the parents (Zebedee) and friends of the 4 disciples to this sudden and drastic change in their lives. Are there times in your life when you have suddenly felt drawn ("called") to make a radical change and head in a new direction? Were you suddenly confronted with an antagonistic challenge to which you had to respond with conviction – trusting that you "had what it takes" to follow this new path? Give thanks to God for the power and authority you were given.

Wednesday (Mark 1:29-45)

After Jesus and his companions leave the "church" (synagogue) they go to Simon's house where Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law. This is followed by what we might be call a "healing and revival meeting" that evening where Jesus' healing and delivering power is abundantly demonstrated. But the next morning he is "pulled" to move on. When an unknown leper invites Jesus to heal him "if he chooses", Jesus reacts forcefully out of pity or anger, emphatically carrying out the healing and insisting that the healed leper follow all of the ritual protocol to verify the healing.

Have you ever "followed" a religious or spiritual leader (evangelist, spiritual healer, etc.) and been touched by God's grace and power through their ministry? What was the result for you? Jesus' early successes are also potentially problematic because others may distract him to remain and continue to "heal everybody in town." Have you had experience with being distracted (even by good intentions) from continuing what God has called you to do? How do you "stay the course" as Christ's disciple and not be side-tracked by other "good deeds?"

Thursday (Mark 2:1-12)

Jesus once again returns to his home town but word "gets out" that he's back and everyone gathers for another "healing and revival meeting." Four people with strong convictions – both in their love for a paralyzed man, and their certainty that Jesus can heal him – go to extraordinary lengths to place the man in front of Jesus. "When Jesus saw their faith" (of the four persons) he happily pronounces that the paralyzed man is made whole – spiritually (sins forgiven) and physically. (healed) Some religious persons take offence that Jesus has stepped outside of acceptable religious practice – but Jesus confirms both the forgiveness of sin and the healing of the body.

When your need for healing was great (physically, emotionally or spiritually) have you experienced persons who have put their love into action and not given up until you had relief? Have you done this for someone else? Did you then, or can you now, see how God was able to work through you (and possibly others)?

Friday (Mark 2:13-22)

Jesus' decision to call a tax collector to join him as a disciple (tax collectors were loathed by the community for cooperating with the Roman occupiers of Israel.) results in he (and his disciples) attending a dinner party comprised mainly of other societal outcasts. This behaviour does not sit well with the religious establishment but Jesus concentrates on God's purpose for his life and ministry. The question about fasting illustrates (again) that Jesus is initiating something new that can not be interpreted as simply a further development of existing religious practice.

By being open and receptive to someone outside of your usual social circle, have you found yourself invited into some very "different" company outside of your comfort zone? Have you worried about how this might look to others and been tempted to withdraw? In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, God announces that God is doing something new! It is only in hindsight that the connection between the new and old becomes clear. What new "thing" (ethical, moral or religious practice) do you see emerging that, as odd, or even offensive, as it may seem, could be God's initiative? How are you responding?

Saturday (Mark 2:23-3:6)

Both sections of this reading illustrate Jesus' appropriate respect for the Law and its purposes. The Law is meant to serve the wellbeing of God's People – not to exclude them from God's love and grace. It is not that Jesus lacks respect for the Law, but rather insists on it being used for its real purpose. In the first section, the disciples were clearly hungry – they were not trying to do "harvest work" on the Sabbath. In the second instance, Jesus seems to "use" the occasion to once again promote the primacy of human well-being over the prescriptions of the Law.

In both instances, the position that Jesus takes seems obvious to us – of course we would do the "loving" thing. But can you think of instances in our lives (in our communities, in society) where you hesitate to meet a need that is presented to you because it seems to break "protocol" or accepted practice? (consider the many social justice movements around racism, addictions, criminal justice and rehabilitation, poverty ...) Are you being challenged to change your thinking and respond differently?

¹ From *Celebrating Common Prayer*, Society of St. Francis, published by Mowbray, London, 1992