

Closing prayer

Reader Lord God, you have called us to gather
and to reflect on your Word,
and to enter the journey through Lent in the footsteps of your Son

**All Bless our week ahead
so that your Word makes its home in us
and we are able to respond with open hearts
to the call to follow your Son.**

Reader And may God bless us now and always

**All the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit
Amen.**

Responding with our lives

Sometimes we are all too aware of being faced with testing times - dilemmas, decisions, challenging circumstances. There may be no simple solution, but what we do know is that Jesus also had a time of confronting his demons, so we are not alone when we are put to the test, even when we fail.

This may be a turbulent time in your life or it may be a calm time. Whatever the reality of your life, there will be opportunities in the dilemmas of every day to ask 'Am I acting in ways which are consistent with my faith in God?'

This week, become aware of the choices you make, both small and large, and reflect on your reasons for making them.

God so Loved the World: Responding with Passion

1st Sunday of Lent, Year B

The kingdom of God is close at hand.

(Mark 1:15)

Opening prayer

Reader We gather in the name of the Father
**All whose passionate love for his children
was shown in sending his Son into the world
to live and to love.**

Reader We gather in the name of the Son
**All who calls us into discipleship –
to respond to the love of the Father
by lives of loving service of God and our neighbour.**

Reader We gather in the name of the Holy Spirit
**All who dwells in our hearts
and prompts us daily to respond anew
to the love of God
and the call of Christ.**



To share

In joining a reflection group this Lent, you are making a considerable commitment by being so generous with your time and energy.

What are you hoping for from Lent?

How do you hope the group might help you in this?

Listening

Mark 1:12-15

God's love revealed

Our Sunday Lent readings this year begin, as usual, with an account of Jesus' time of being tested, but we also have an ominous pointer to Jesus' death here right at the start of the story of his ministry. Mark refers to John's arrest. The forerunner, John, has been given up into the power of the authorities. What, then will happen to the One, i.e. Jesus, who follows?

Mark tells us that the Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness, and he reminds us that it is the Spirit of God who is at work in Jesus. Mark's stark treatment of the story concentrates our attention on the few details he does give us. The location, the wilderness, suggests that he is thinking of the testing of Israel in the desert. The presence of wild beasts and the reference to angels suggest that he may be thinking of Adam, who succumbed to Satan's temptation, and so lost dominion over wild beasts. What is Mark hinting at in making these references? Is it that Jesus is the one who reverses Adam's sin because of his obedience to God, and so exercises the authority which God intended men and women to have? In this passage we hear briefly about the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. He returns to Galilee, and proclaims 'the good news from God.' He announces that the time is fulfilled, and that the Kingdom of God has drawn near. We realise that it has drawn near in the person of Jesus himself.

Responding with our hearts

What is your reaction to the idea of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness?

We hear that there is a significant shift in Jesus in that wilderness experience, where 'the angels looked after him'. Have you ever experienced significant shifts in your life? Looking back, can you identify where God was in those events?

To discuss

We do not know what the disciples felt when they heard of Jesus going through this experience. How do you imagine they reacted?

When have you been 'in the wilderness'? Did anything 'tempt' you to consider making decisions which would have led you away from God rather than towards God?

Who looked after you then? What was that like?

Has there ever been a time when something unexpectedly good has emerged from a really tough time in your life?

