

SOLE⁺BAY CHURCHES

BLYTHBURGH • REYDON • SOUTH COVE
SOTHERTON • SOUTHWOLD • UGGESHALL
WALBERSWICK • WANGFORD CUM HENHAM

Worship at Home: Sunday 21 February

First Sunday of Lent

Preparation

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

Hear our voice, O Lord, according to your faithful love,
according to your judgement give us life.

Blessed are you, God of compassion and mercy,
to you be praise and glory for ever.

In the darkness of our sin,
your light breaks forth like the dawn
and your healing springs up for deliverance.

As we rejoice in the gift of your saving help,
sustain us with your bountiful Spirit
and open our lips to sing your praise.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God for ever.

A Song of Penitence

Have mercy on me, O God, in your great goodness; ♦
according to the abundance of your compassion
blot out my offences.

Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness ♦
and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my faults ♦
and my sin is ever before me.

Against you only have I sinned ♦
and done what is evil in your sight,

So that you are justified in your sentence ♦
and righteous in your judgement.

Cast me not away from your presence ♦
and take not your holy spirit from me.

Give me again the joy of your salvation ♦
and sustain me with your gracious spirit;

Then shall I teach your ways to the wicked ♦
and sinners shall return to you.

Deliver me from my guilt, O God,
the God of my salvation, ♦
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.

Psalm 51.1-5, 12-15

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

This opening prayer may be said

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us;
let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever.

Amen.

The Word of God

Psalmody

The appointed psalmody is said.

Psalm 77

In the day of my trouble I have sought the Lord.

I cry aloud to God; ♦
I cry aloud to God and he will hear me.

In the day of my trouble I have sought the Lord; ♦
by night my hand is stretched out and does not tire;
my soul refuses comfort.

I think upon God and I groan; ♦
I ponder, and my spirit faints.

You will not let my eyelids close; ♦
I am so troubled that I cannot speak. *R*

I consider the days of old; ♦
I remember the years long past;

I commune with my heart in the night; ♦
my spirit searches for understanding.

Will the Lord cast us off for ever? ♦
Will he no more show us his favour?

Has his loving mercy clean gone for ever? ♦
Has his promise come to an end for evermore?

Has God forgotten to be gracious? ♦
Has he shut up his compassion in displeasure?

And I said, 'My grief is this: ♦
that the right hand of the Most High has lost its strength.' *R*

I will remember the works of the Lord ♦
and call to mind your wonders of old time.

I will meditate on all your works ♦
and ponder your mighty deeds.

Your way, O God, is holy; ♦
who is so great a god as our God?

You are the God who worked wonders ♦
and declared your power among the peoples.

With a mighty arm you redeemed your people, ♦
the children of Jacob and Joseph. *R*

The waters saw you, O God;
the waters saw you and were afraid; ♦
the depths also were troubled.

The clouds poured out water; the skies thundered; ✦
your arrows flashed on every side;

The voice of your thunder was in the whirlwind;
your lightnings lit up the ground; ✦
the earth trembled and shook.

Your way was in the sea, and your paths in the great waters, ✦
but your footsteps were not known.

You led your people like sheep ✦
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

In the day of my trouble I have sought the Lord.

*God our shepherd,
you led us and saved us in times of old;
do not forget your people in their troubles,
but raise up your power
to sustain the poor and helpless;
for the honour of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Each psalm or group of psalms may end with

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

***If there are two Scripture readings, the first may be read here, or both
may be read after the canticle.***

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."

Refrain:

**Full of compassion and mercy and love
is God, the Most High, the Almighty.**

Lord almighty and God of our ancestors, ♦
you who made heaven and earth in all their glory:

All things tremble with awe at your presence, ♦
before your great and mighty power.

Immeasurable and unsearchable is your promised mercy, ♦
for you are God, Most High.

You are full of compassion, long-suffering and very merciful, ♦
and you relent at human suffering.

O God, according to your great goodness, ♦
you have promised forgiveness for repentance
to those who have sinned against you.

The sins I have committed against you ♦
are more in number than the sands of the sea.

I am not worthy to look up to the height of heaven, ♦
because of the multitude of my iniquities.

And now I bend the knee of my heart before you, ♦
imploping your kindness upon me.

I have sinned, O God, I have sinned, ♦
and I acknowledge my transgressions.

Unworthy as I am, you will save me, ♦
according to your great mercy.

For all the host of heaven sings your praise, ♦
and your glory is for ever and ever.

Manasseh 1a, 2, 4, 6, 7a, b, 9a, c, 11, 12, 14b, 15b

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

**Full of compassion and mercy and love
is God, the Most High, the Almighty.**

Scripture Reading

One or more readings appointed for the day are read.

The reading(s) may be followed by a time of silence.

Mark 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptised 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 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."

Sermon

***'Sunbeams scorching all the day;
chilly dew-drops nightly shed;
prowling beasts about Thy way;
stones Thy pillow; earth Thy bed'.***

These familiar words written by the aptly named, Rev. George Hunt Smytton in 1856 capture the image well of the heat of the desert, lack of shelter during the day, freezing cold temperatures at night, the dangers from wild animals, which at the time of Christ included lions, and no where to lay one's head. It is worth just reflecting how tough Jesus' time in the wilderness was.....

Lent has often been referred to as a journey –

We journey through Lent, as we journey to the cross, our Lenten pilgrimage, to give just a few examples.

In essence it means we start at a particular point on our own faith journey and using the five weeks of Lent we move and work towards the joy of Easter Day. But, as many wiser people than myself have said without embracing the wilderness of the desert, and the desolation of the cross, then the joy of Easter can sometimes feel quite muted.

For nearly a whole year we could describe the pandemic as a Lenten journey that for many people around the world has cost them everything: loved ones, relationships, livelihoods, businesses, friendships, education, experiences, loss of self and loss of purpose. In these circumstances we all long for that Easter, perhaps not this Easter, when the pandemic is finally under control.

I have recently read the novel called 'The Salt Path' by Raynor Winn, which is a true story of a journey of loss on a horrifying scale.

Just days after Raynor learns that Moth, her husband of 32 years, is terminally ill, their home and livelihood is taken away, due to a business deal that goes terribly wrong. With nothing left and little time, they make the brave and impulsive decision to walk the 630 miles of the sea-swept South West Coast Path, from Somerset to Dorset, via Devon and Cornwall.

They have almost no money for food or shelter and must carry only the essentials for survival, including a tent on their 50+ year old backs as they live wild in the ancient, weathered landscape of cliffs, sea and sky. Yet through every step, every encounter, and every test along the way, their walk becomes a remarkable journey.

The Salt Path is an honest and life-affirming true story of coming to terms with grief and the healing power of the natural world. Ultimately, it is a portrayal of home, and how it can be lost, rebuilt, and rediscovered in the most unexpected ways.

For Ray and Moth there is an Easter moment, but it does cost them nearly everything. It is only when everything is lost, that something of greater value is found. The novel would be a good story to read during Lent.....

A lot of a priest's work involves ministering to the bereaved and supporting them at this moment of acute loss, and when we think of bereavement this is often the life changing moment that we all think of.

However, if we are honest with ourselves then we all have Lenten moments in our life when we feel overwhelmed by change and feel seasick by the 'changes and chances of this life'.

I would like you to think for a moment about events like this in your own life: when you experienced a loss of love; loss of a job; loss of a house; loss of a spouse or life long partner; loss of money; loss of freedom; loss of physical strength; loss of beauty; loss of self esteem; loss of identity; loss of health.

There might be others, but I hope some of the examples ring home to you.

These are our wilderness moments when we may feel God is far from us, or probably more likely we are far from God.

The readings for this first Sunday of Lent remind us of other Lenten journeys in the Bible. The first from Genesis tells us of the myth/story of Noah and how after the forty days of the flood when all life was destroyed on the earth apart from the seven people in the ark and seven of each species, the floods finally subside and when a dove returns to Noah with a branch in its mouth he knows that land must be near.

After such a devastating judgement God promises Noah, that every living creature and all his descendants, and that means you and me, that He will never destroy the earth completely again.

This first covenant recorded in the Bible, or binding relationship between God and humanity is marked by the first rainbow in the sky, and it symbolises the promise between God and us.

A dove is also present at the baptism of Jesus and according to Mark descends on him, in the form of a dove, as God's Holy Spirit, sealing and confirming Jesus' mission and vocation as Messiah. The dove is like the rainbow in the Genesis story, marking and sealing a moment of covenant and also a new age – in this instance the dawn of the Kingdom of God.

We are told that after Jesus' baptism that the Spirit 'drove' Jesus in to the wilderness where he remained for forty days and nights. Mark tells us that the Holy Spirit literally 'drives' or even better in the Greek, almost 'propels' Jesus in to the wilderness where like in the story of Noah Jesus spends 40 days and 40 nights battling with the dark side within himself and the forces of evil. The number 40 in the Bible is symbolic of a time of trial. Over those 40 days Jesus is perplexed by what kind of Messiah he should be, and what kind of ministry he should embody. It is only as a result of Jesus' time in the wilderness that he becomes clear of his destiny and purpose, and where that will ultimately lead him to the cross.

This was Jesus' Lenten journey, the first Lenten journey that we too all make in our own lives, literally by our journey through life, and as we reminded through our Lenten observance each year.

We need to be aware of the bruises and wounds that we bear as a result of our own losses and journey through life that we have sustained because in recognising our own wounds we can be a source of healing to others.

It was Henri Nouwen, the Dutch, Catholic Priest, who wrote,

'Nobody escapes being wounded. We all are wounded people. The main question is not 'How can we hide our wounds?' so we don't have to be embarrassed, but 'How can we put our woundedness in the service of others?' When our wounds cease to be a source of shame, and become a source of healing, we have become wounded healers.'

This Lent we are being called at this continuing time of pandemic and trial to recognise our own woundedness, so that we too can be wounded healers.

It was the prophet Isaiah, seeing way into God's future, who in chapter 53:5 wrote of the suffering servant.

*'He was wounded for our iniquities
and by his wounds we are healed'*

Amen

Rev Alan

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul;
O my God, in you I trust.
You are the God of my salvation,
To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
In you I hope all the day long.
O my God, in you I trust.
Remember, Lord, your compassion and love,
for they are from everlasting.
To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul;
O my God, in you I trust.

from Psalm 25

Gospel Canticle

The Benedictus (The Song of Zechariah) is normally said,

Refrain:

**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they shall be satisfied.**

Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, ✦
who has come to his people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, ✦
born of the house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets God promised of old ✦
to save us from our enemies,
from the hands of all that hate us,

To show mercy to our ancestors, ✦
and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham: ✦
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,

Free to worship him without fear, ✦
holy and righteous in his sight
all the days of our life.

And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, ✦
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,

To give his people knowledge of salvation ♦
by the forgiveness of all their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God ♦
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,

To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, ♦
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Luke 1.68-79

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Refrain:

**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they shall be satisfied.**

Prayers

Intercessions are offered

¶ for the day and its tasks

¶ for the world and its needs

¶ for the Church and her life

¶ Those preparing for baptism and confirmation

¶ Those serving through leadership

¶ Those looking for forgiveness

¶ Those misled by the false gods of this present age

¶ All who are hungry

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer

Silence may be kept.

The Collect of the day is said

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.

The Lord's Prayer is said

Trusting in the compassion of God,
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

**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.**

The Conclusion

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

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.