

**Worship for first Sunday in Lent
21st February 2021**

from Brian & Clare Kennard

Opening sentence: “In you, LORD my God,
I put my trust. I trust in you;
do not let me be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.”
(Psalm 25: 1-2)

**Hymn suggestion:
OVER ALL THE EARTH,**

You reign on high,
Every mountain stream,
Every sunset sky.
But my one request,
Lord, my only aim
Is that You’d reign in me again.

*Lord, reign in me,
Reign in Your power;
Over all my dreams,
In my darkest hour.
You are the Lord of all I am,
So won’t You reign in me again?*

Over every thought,
Over every word,
May my life reflect the beauty of my Lord;
‘Cause You mean more to me
Than any earthly thing,
So won’t You reign in me again?

Prayer time:

*Be still and focus on the awesome God we serve:
great beyond all words, but revealing Himself
through His Word, and most clearly through the
Word who became flesh - the Lord Jesus Christ.
Express your adoration, worship and praise in
whatever ways you can.*

Prayer for today (“Collect”):

Heavenly Father,
your Son battled with the powers of darkness,
and grew closer to you in the desert:
help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and
prayer
that we may witness to your saving love
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Confession

The Bible says, “If we say we have no sin, we
deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we
confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us
our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”
(1 John 4: 8-9)

*Let God speak to you about the attitudes and actions
that need changing in your life. Confess to Him your
weaknesses and failures, and receive His cleansing
and forgiveness as He has promised.*

Bible readings:

If you have your own Bible, please read: **Psalm
25 : 1-20**

Mark 1:9-15

The Baptism and Testing of Jesus

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee
and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as
Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw
heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on
him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven:
“You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well
pleased.”

¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the
wilderness, ¹³ and he was in the wilderness forty
days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild
animals, and angels attended him.

Jesus Announces the Good News

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into
Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ “The
time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has
come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Meditation

Today is the first Sunday in Lent. The word itself is
just a shortening of the word “lengthen”, meaning
that this is time of year when the days are getting
longer. For the believer, though, it is an opportunity
to travel with Jesus through those events which
ended with His atoning death and looking forward
to His glorious resurrection on the first Easter day.
It has been traditional to “give something up” for
Lent as a response to the self-giving of Jesus, “who
loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians
2:20). Maybe too, we should take the opportunity to
“take something on” in the way of prayer, study of
the scriptures, giving of our time and energy to
others to share in the life of love lived by Jesus?

I also want us to think of the everyday use of the word “lent”. If we are believers, our lives have been purchased at a great cost (see 1 Corinthians 6:20) and the life we now live has been lent back to us - entrusted to us - that we might be fruitful in God’s Kingdom. Jesus Himself said to his disciples, “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and appointed you to go and bear fruit..” (John 15:16)

So let’s move on to today’s Bible passage and see how it illustrates what I have just been saying:

1. Jesus completely identifies with us sinners (v9), which is why he who was sinless was baptised for us to follow his example. We are to fully identify ourselves with Jesus: “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.” (Matthew 10:32) In baptism, Jesus pledged Himself to His Father’s business: ‘My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.(John 4:34)
2. To be effective (“Fruitful”), Jesus needed the infilling power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit (v10). Don’t you and I?
3. Jesus has a unique relationship to the eternal God...”my Son” ...notice the capital letter! Although it is impossible to explain in words the nature of the Holy Trinity, we can be confident with Paul that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19). We also notice that God was pleased with Jesus. Isn’t the deepest longing of the disciple to hear, when our life on earth is done, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21)?
4. Testing times may come as a result of our own failures and follies, or of the wickedness of others, but it can also be a part of God’s personal training regime (v12). Notice that it was the Spirit that led Jesus into the wilderness. I’ve never been in the armed forces, but new recruits seem to do a lot of marching, running with a heavy pack, jumping into ditches, crawling under barbed wire and similar fun activities. Oh, and learning strict obedience to orders. All this not because their officers hate them (hopefully), but because they need to be equipped for very challenging roles. You and I are God’s army of love and righteousness in the world, and we need a lot of training and encouragement!
5. The time has come! (v15) Here’s a silly little rhyme for you: “Procrastination is a sin, I view it with much sorrow; to change myself I will begin, starting with....tomorrow!” No! “Now is the day of salvation, now is the acceptable hour” (2 Corinthians 6:2). To “repent” is to have a change of

mind, that is to see things from a different perspective - from God’s angle, in the light of eternity. And although Christian discipleship is costly, it’s absolutely Good News! (v15 again)

As has been often said, God loves you just as you are - but loves you too much to leave you like that! The Lord bless us real good as we keep our lives open to Him in this Lenten season. **Amen.**

Prayer time. In your own words, remember before God...those in authority in this country and around the world grappling with the present crisis and the many other difficult problems humanity faces....all those “on the front line” whether NHS staff, transport workers, shop workers, the emergency services...those most personally affected by the Covid-19 outbreak: the bereaved, those seriously ill, those who have already lost their jobs.. the Church of Jesus Christ as together we seek to witness to the love and care of God in word and action....that people everywhere would recognise that those of every race and language are made in the image of God and that we are all one in Christ...and for yourself and your family. Pray for Owen O’Neill, previous Catholic chaplain here, who is seriously ill in hospital. Remember, too, thankfulness!

The Lord’s Prayer (traditional version):

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 blessing: Now may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with and remain with us always. Amen.

Next week’s reflections will be from Jeanne Moore, and she will tell you about how she’s progressing then.