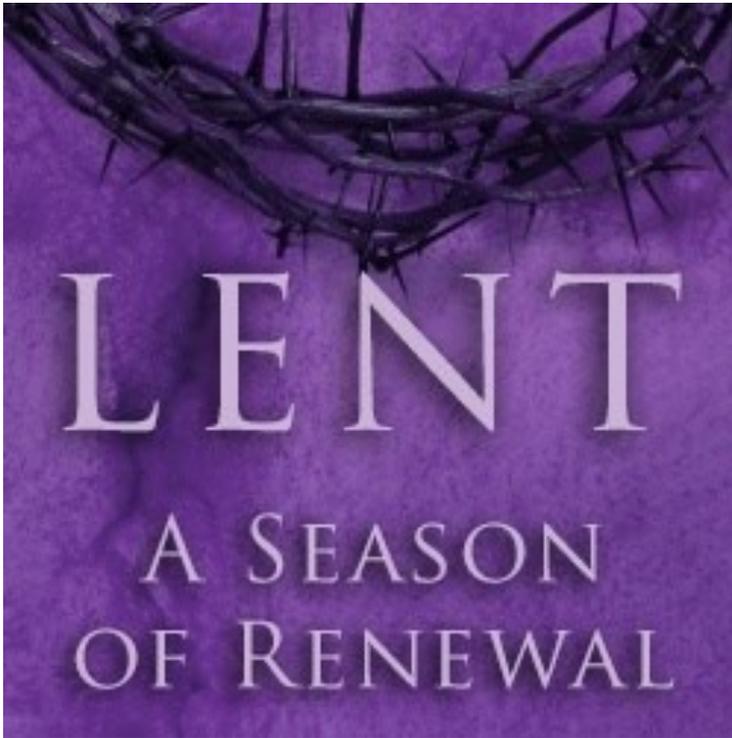


Church of St Chad
Hopwas



Morning Service
First Sunday of Lent
21st February 2021



*Following Christ in the footsteps
of St Chad*

Welcome

HYMN Lead us, Heavenly Father, lead us

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.



THE GREETING

The Lord be with you
and also with you.

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom
no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify
your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**



PRAYERS OF PENITENCE

Summary of the Law

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

"The first commandment is this: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

The second is this: Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets".

Amen. Lord, have mercy

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. Let us confess our sins remembering before God the times when we have fallen from temptation into sin.

Silence

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

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

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

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

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

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

"Create
in me a
clean heart,
O God,
and put a
new **and right**
spirit
within me."
Psalms 51:10



Almighty God,
who forgives
all who truly repent,
have mercy upon *you*,
pardon and deliver *you*
from all *your* sins,
confirm and strengthen *you*
in all goodness,
and keep *you* in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen



THE COLLECT

Heavenly Father, your Son,
battled with the powers of darkness,
and grew closer to you in the wilderness:
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.



FIRST READING

1 Peter 3:18-22

For Christ also suffered for sins once for all,
the righteous for the unrighteous,
in order to bring you to God.

He was put to death in the flesh,
but made alive in the spirit,
in which also he went and made a proclamation
to the spirits in prison,

who in former times did not obey,
when God waited patiently in the days of Noah,
during the building of the ark,
in which a few, that is,
eight people, were saved through water.

And baptism, which this prefigured,
now saves you
not as a removal of dirt from the body,
but as an appeal to God for a good conscience,
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

who has gone into heaven
and is at the right hand of God,
with angels, authorities, and powers
made subject to him.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

HYMN

Father, hear the prayer we offer

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to **MARK** (1:9-15)

Glory to you O Lord

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.'

This is the gospel of the Lord

Praise to You O Christ

SERMON

Mark tells us that the Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness. Luke and Matthew also have the same story but Mark's account is very different. Whereas Luke and Matthew cover this story in detail, Mark covers it in just two verses.

Today begins our journey through Lent, a journey in which we need to remember that the goal of Lent is not "just to get through it" but to really live it and experience it.

We are told that Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days, being tempted by Satan. Mark tells us that Jesus did not volunteer to go there. He tells us that the Spirit drove him there rather than simply make a suggestion. If we are honest, we wouldn't volunteer to go there either. But the wilderness is not a place that we can hide from. All of us in our own lives will go through tough times wilderness times.

We have, all of us and the whole world in most respects, been struggling through the wilderness of Covid 19 for nearly 12 months now. Like Jesus in his wilderness we did not seek our Covid wilderness. It emerged from who knows where to wreak havoc on our unsuspecting and unprepared world. None of us volunteered for this and none of us are free from it's devastating effects. Our wilderness has been long and hard and still continues.

Periods of hardship, loss of loved ones, divorce, and loss of employment, (amongst others) will undoubtedly occur at some time in our lives. But this Pandemic has magnified them out of all proportion to anything that we have ever known. So here is a very difficult question that I barely dare to ask. Is it even possible to imagine, that the Spirit might make use of us (You and Me) during these ongoing wilderness challenges that we are still enduring.

I am not suggesting for one minute that God causes us misery or suffering; not to teach us something and definitely not to punish us or put us in our place. Similarly, I don't believe that God ever wants us to suffer, let alone cause us to. But I do believe that God is at work, both for us and through us during our wilderness times. And, if we can imagine such a thing, then the constant "*why me?*" question changes. It's a different question altogether. It changes from *Why Me?* to "*What am I to learn from this situation?*"

This new question is not meant to liberate us from struggle and suffering. It is to remind us of God's presence during these wilderness times. God will not abandon us. The same Spirit of God that descended upon Jesus at his Baptism and drove him into the wilderness, also accompanied him during that time and brought him back again. So God will not abandon us during our times in the wilderness. God is, after all, in the business of taking that which seems only to cause death, and somehow wring from it resurrection life.

Jesus enters the wilderness, not with the view that he will succeed. Jesus enters the wilderness only with the promise of God's presence. Not with fighting skills; not with self-help strategies; not with techniques for passing the tests. Jesus enters the wilderness, after hearing God's direct words to him alone, that God will be there with him.

Because Mark does not offer a list of temptations like Luke and Matthew, we ought to reflect on perhaps our greatest temptation when we endure our own wilderness times, as in this Pandemic. Our greatest temptation during these times in our own wilderness, is to think that God is not present; that God has given up; that God has withdrawn. We are fully aware of those excruciating times when God is silent.

But I want to say this. It is very clear from Mark's gospel that God is present in it all.

Lent will be different this year. There is a gospel song by Bruce Springsteen called "Keep your eyes on the prize", and there is a line in this song which says:

*the only thing I did was wrong
was staying in the wilderness far to long*

There are now thankfully, green shoots of hope on the horizon . The vaccination programmes are working remarkably well and the important numbers for this Pandemic are beginning to fall. We too have been in this wilderness far too long.

Lent is always seen as a pilgrimage through an intentional wilderness, but I think that Lent this year needs to be:

a time of recuperation
a time of reflection
a time of strengthening

A time of preparing ourselves to re-engage in our role as loving humans, alongside our loving God, in the form of Jesus Christ. We do not walk this road alone. We never walk this road alone. God is always with us.

Howard Thurman , the mystic, theologian, and spiritual guide for Martin Luther King Jr. said this:

*The true purpose of all spiritual disciplines
is to clear away whatever may block our awareness of
that which is God in us*

Let us bear this in mind, as we begin to emerge from our year long imposed time of wilderness

Amen



HYMN O love that wilt not let me go

CREED

We say together in faith

**Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come.**

We believe in God the Father,
who created all things:
**for by his will they were created
and have their being.**

We believe in God the Son,
who was slain:
**for with his blood,
he purchased us for God,
from every tribe and language,
from every people and nation.**

We believe in God the Holy Spirit:
**the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!'
Even so come, Lord Jesus!
Amen.**



PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

This response is used throughout these prayers

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer.**

And at the end **Merciful Father,
accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS (Offered by Sue Rose)

Most holy Lord, you were tempted as we are, be our strength in times of weakness. When we fall, lift us up, when we are in error, direct us. In all our wanderings, be our guide; That we may be your faithful people to our life's end. **Amen.**

Lord, we pray for people who are tempted by wealth and possessions, and the need for power over others. We ourselves are set in the midst of temptation because of the weakness of our human nature. Help us to remain steadfast in our faith, and commitment to you Lord, that whatever we have to endure because of our sins and failures, we may overcome with your love and help. May we use this Lent as a time of renewal and dedication to you our Saviour.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

Lord Jesus, you came to reconcile us to God, and teach us the way of forgiveness. In your name we pray for forgiveness and reconciliation in the broken relationships that cause unnecessary and needless pain and heartache, in families, between friends and between nations. Particularly we pray for the UK's relationship with the EU, and pray for the barrier of animosity to be broken down and replaced with a willingness to build working relationships to benefit the people and rebuild economies when the battle against Covid 19 has been won.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

Heavenly Father, we pray for the time when swords will be beaten into ploughshares, and disagreements resolved by words not fighting and bloodshed. We pray for all those caught up in the civil violence and war that has been on television news broadcasts across the world for decades. Raise up your people Lord to speak peace in their lands and to speak out against the injustice of those who rule for selfish gain of power to the detriment of the people they govern.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

We give thanks, Father, that the numbers of cases and deaths from Covid 19 are gradually coming down as the effect of the lockdown, and the increasing numbers of people receiving the vaccine, are greatly helping to reduce the spread of the virus. Our NHS staff have gone above and beyond their calling to serve their fellow man, and we pray for their health and wellbeing in the light of the tiring shifts still ahead of them, as many turn to delivering the vaccines ensuring the protection of the population against the virus.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

Precious Lord, we bring to you all who have lost hope and cannot cope with the world as it is today. We remember before you all who have lost faith, those who no longer pray, and those who find it difficult to trust in you or anyone. We pray, Holy Spirit, that you will bring them back into the fold, for God to fill their lives anew with his love, peace and joy.

Lord, we also pray for those suffering mentally, for the lonely, for the depressed and the anxious. May the organisations who provide help and support be able to bring hope and calm in times of need to those who suffer and their families.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

Into the light of your healing grace Father, we bring to you those in need of help to cope with situations where pain is constant and peace is absent. We remember friends and family members, and especially at this time

Beryl and Roger, Audrey, Jack, Melanie Lees, Lesley Fox,
Jim, Barbara and Edwin Bott, Norma, Catherine and Eric,
Dave Atkinson, Ann Thurgood, Michael Dalton,
and Finn Collyer.

Lord of infinite mercy, as the rain pours down upon the earth pour your grace and healing balm upon all who suffer in body mind or spirit.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

We give you thanks and praise for all who have triumphed over evil and temptation and who now serve you in the peace of your kingdom. We pray for those who are departed from our sight, and pray that at the last we may share with them in glory.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

Almighty God, you are the Father of salvation and through the baptism, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ we are brought into the everlasting covenant which you made with Noah.

**Merciful Father,
Accept these prayers
for the sake of your son
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen**

LORDS PRAYER

**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**



HYMN Great is thy faithfulness

THE GRACE *(Shared with each other)*

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all this day and forever more. Amen

BLESSING

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,
to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

Amen

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ.

Amen.

If you are able to access our church website
you can find us on:

www.stchadhopwas.co.uk



STAY SAFE. STAY WELL

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