

Sacredise Daily

Personal Worship Resources for the Week:

11 - 17 February 2018

Thought for the Week:

The Church Calendar is soon to change again. From our current season after the Epiphany, we will soon be embarking on the journey of penitence and preparation that we know as Lent. Beginning on Wednesday, Lent was traditionally a time of preparation for baptismal candidates who would be baptised on Easter Sunday. While we may not be looking forward to baptism, we are preparing for the important spiritual exercise of Holy Week, and the Easter season that follows it.

But, before we get there, this Sunday invites us to witness what must have been one of the most beautiful and important experiences for the three disciples that Jesus called to accompany him. Peter, James, and John got a glimpse of the glorified Jesus, and witnessed both the appearance of Moses and Elijah, and the affirming voice of God. But, what they didn't realise was that this was a turning point for Jesus. His conversation with the two great Old Testament leaders revealed that he was to fulfil, in himself, everything that the law and the prophets had promised. The voice of God gave Jesus the strength, courage and assurance that the road he was to walk was the right one, no matter what lay ahead. And when everything had returned to normal, Jesus reminded the disciples of what he had already told them – he would die and rise again.

The vision of God's glory was a gift to Jesus and the disciples to sustain them through the tough trials ahead. Now for us, this last vision of God's glory, at the end of the season after the Epiphany, is a gift to sustain us through the difficult, but life-giving, work of Lent. In these last few days before Ash Wednesday, why not take some extra time to prepare your heart for what is to come?

Transfiguration Sunday 11 February 2018

Reading: Mark 9:2-9

Reflection: Throughout the Epiphany season, we have received glimpses of God's glory as it is revealed through Jesus. We have heard the message of God's Reign and we have seen it in action. But what has been clear from all of this is that God has not been "showing off." The manifestations of God's grace and power through Jesus have all been for the purpose of communication. And as we witness God's glory, as we hear God's message, we are called to respond, as the first disciples did, with our lives.

In the Transfiguration, God communicates in an awesome way, because the message is an awesome message - Jesus is God's beloved child, and we are to listen to him. And what Jesus shows us in this moment of glory is that the life of love and justice that he was committed to would bring suffering and death. In the same way, if we seek to follow Jesus into this loving life, we must expect the pain of wrestling against hatred and injustice wherever we find it.

How can you open yourself to God's glory a little more today? How can you allow this vision of glory to lead you deeper in your commitment to love and life?

Practice for Today: It takes courage to live as a follower of Jesus, and nothing releases courage in our hearts like a vision of God's glory. To open yourself to God's glory today, why not take every opportunity to notice the glory around you, and to celebrate it in praise?

Breath-Prayer for Today: Give me eyes to see your glory, God, and ears to hear the message it proclaims.

Monday 12 February 2018

Reading: Exodus 19:7-25

Reflection: After bringing the Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt, God was anxious to connect with God's people, and to begin the work of forming them into a nation for God's glory. Moses has done as he was instructed and has brought the people to the foot of Mount Sinai. Now God tells Moses to prepare the people to meet with God. There is much fear, and a clear sense that if people tried to get too close they would die. The belief that underlies this idea is that God's holiness would burn up sin like paper in a fire, killing the

sinner. What the people seemed to miss, though - if their reaction to God in 20:19 is anything to go by - is that God wanted a relationship with them.

The miracle for us is that we no longer fear God's glory and presence, because we have no reason to believe we will be killed. Jesus has shown us how deeply committed God is to us, and how much God longs for intimacy with us, and so now God's glory can be a place of comfort, healing, and safety. The danger for us is not death, but the familiarity that breeds contempt.

How can you find a home in God's glory today, without taking God's love and grace for granted?

Practice for Today: The old practice of invocation - of asking for God's presence and glory to be with us - is a good way to stay aware of God's love. Why not practice invocation in every situation today?

Breath-Prayer for Today: Help me, O God, to find a home in your glory, no matter what I face today.

Tuesday 13 February 2018

Reading: 1 Timothy 3:14-16

Reflection: Today is Shrove Tuesday, which is traditionally the last day of feasting and celebration before the Lenten fast. It is appropriate, then, that our reading today should give us one final feast of Christ's glory before the journey to share Christ's suffering. The old apostle, writing to this young pastor, affirms the truth of Christ's life and message, and the truth of what the Church is. It's a glorious picture of a community founded on the One who is the truth, and of a Christ who revealed God's glory to the whole world - seen and unseen!

It is clear again, though, that we cannot encounter Jesus without making a response of some kind. It is the vision of Jesus' life that shows us how we are to live as those in the "household of God." Jesus brought life and grace to people - he gave them an experience of God's glory - not just through his preaching, but through the way he viewed them and treated them. In the same way, God asks that our words, actions, and attitudes reveal God's

grace and love to others, so that they too can be drawn to faith in Christ.

Who needs you to treat them in a Christlike way today? How can you best do this?

Practice for Today: At the threshold of Lent, now would be a good time to make a new commitment to following Jesus, and living in a Christlike way. Why not reaffirm your commitment in all the aspects of your life as you go through your day today?

Breath-Prayer for Today: I believe in you, Jesus, and I commit myself again to following your ways in my life.

Ash Wednesday 14 February 2018

Reading: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Reflection: There are three disciplines that are commonly practiced in the Lenten season - prayer, giving, and fasting. Each one connects with one of the big three temptations that we all face. Prayer confronts our temptation to power, since you can't pray when you think you're in control. Giving confronts our temptation to accumulate wealth for its own sake. Fasting confronts our temptation to allow our bodily appetites and addictions to control us. During Lent, we are invited to focus more intentionally on confronting our temptations and learning, like Jesus, to overcome them and live with humility, simplicity and discipline - which, although it may not sound like it in today's world, is actually the best and most abundant way to live.

Today is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the Lenten journey, so it's a good time to decide how you will observe the three Lenten practices in the next 40 days. Don't just "give something up" for Lent - choose a fast that can take you deeper into God's grace. Don't just "put something in the collection" - choose a habit of giving that will lead you into greater appreciation for what you have. Don't just "say a few prayers" - choose to practice prayer through a life lived in union with God at all times.

How will you embrace the Lenten practices in the next 40 days?

Practice for Today: Today's practice is actually not just for today,

but for the whole of Lent. Start your practice of prayer, fasting, and giving today, but continue it throughout the Lenten season.

Breath-Prayer for Today: Today, instead of a breath-prayer, carry the Lord's Prayer with you. You can find it in the verses that were skipped in today's reading. Repeat it throughout the day.

Thursday 15 February 2018

Reading: 1 John 1:3-10

Reflection: Today's section from John's first letter offers us a clear guideline for finding "fellowship" - connected relationship - with God and others. It may surprise you to see that John recommends repentance as a key foundational feature of strong relationships. The truth here is quite simple. If we claim to be living one way, but actually live another, it's like living in darkness - we can't connect with God, because we're deceiving ourselves, and others can't connect with us because they don't know who we are. The time when we are most likely to do this is when there is something in us that we regret or are ashamed of, and so we hide our true selves. But, all that happens is that our relationships with God and others break down.

If we want real connection, we need to *be* real. We can only find true intimacy when we are willing to admit to the sin and brokenness in us. It's in all of us, and when we bring it out into the open, it can be healed and forgiven. Then we can connect with God, because we know God's forgiving love, and we can connect with others because they can trust us, knowing that what they see is real.

How can you practice this "living in the light" today?

Practice for Today: One of the best ways to "live in the light" is to make the practice of confession a habit. This simply means that, when we know we have done something wrong, or we have hurt another person, we simply acknowledge it, and ask for forgiveness. Remember to be willing to do what it takes to make it right, though.

Breath-Prayer for Today: Show me where I need to change, O God, and give me the grace to do it.

Friday 16 February 2018

Reading: Psalm 25:1-10

Reflection: As we journey through this Lenten season, one truth we will need to face is that we cannot become the people God wants us to be, or even the people we want to be, on our own. This Psalm, attributed to David, reflects how even Israel's greatest king recognised his need of God's grace and strength. The psalm is a plea for God to enable the writer to live according to God's life-giving ways. It is also a confession, an acknowledgement of the sin that has caused him to go astray. Finally, there is the assurance that God does lead God's people into the ways of life.

This song most likely resonates with all of us. If we're honest, we all find ourselves struggling to overcome the temptations and brokennesses in us that keep us from God's life. We need to know that when we fail we can be forgiven and start again. We also need to know that we have resources beyond ourselves that can empower us to live lives of goodness, beauty, and truth. As we seek to do the work of Lent, we will need to draw on God's resources to change and sustain us.

How can you open yourself to God's strength and grace today?

Practice for Today: Intercession - prayer for ourselves and others - is a gracious gift that is always a key resource in any life of faith. Today, practice praying for yourself and others whenever you think about it, asking God to reveal God's ways, and lead you and others in them.

Breath-Prayer for Today: Show me your ways, O God, and lead me in them.

Saturday 17 February 2018

Reading: Matthew 9:2-13

Reflection: Today's reading from Matthew's Gospel places two seemingly unrelated stories side by side. What connects the people in these two scenarios, though, is their need of a healer. In the first story, a lame man finds healing through Jesus' offer of forgiveness. In the second, Matthew - an outcast, whose friends were the "wrong kind" of people - finds healing through Jesus' call, and through

Jesus' willingness to befriend his "shady" friends. In both cases the religious people are offended. They believe they have it all together, and that Jesus should be living as they do. But, in their self-righteousness and arrogance, they fail to recognise their own need of Jesus, and they lose their ability to be compassionate.

Whenever we think we've got it right it's easy to start looking down on others who don't live or think as we do. It's easy to judge those whose lives are (in our view) a mess. But, the truth is, we all need Christ's grace and healing, and it is only when we recognise our need that we will be willing to come to Christ to be made whole. Further, it is only when we recognise our own brokenness that we can truly be compassionate toward the brokenness in others.

How can you get honest about your need of Christ today, and open yourself to become one of God's "wounded healers"?

Practice for Today: Compassion requires us to give extra attention to what is going on within us and around us. When we pay attention to our own hearts, we easily recognise our need of Jesus' grace. When we pay attention to others, we easily see their need for our compassion. Try to reveal Christ's grace through being more attentive today.

Breath-Prayer for Today: As you care for me, O God, use me to care for others in your name.

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