

Sunday 5th March 2017

The First Sunday of Lent

Purple



Collect

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**

Romans 5:12-19 English Standard Version (ESV)

Death in Adam, Life in Christ

¹²Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men^[a] because all sinned— ¹³for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. ¹⁵But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. ¹⁸Therefore, as one trespass^[b] led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness^[c] leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Footnotes: a. The Greek word *anthropoi* refers here to both men and women; also twice in verse 18. b. or *the trespass of one*. c. or *the act of righteousness of one*.

COMMENT: Here Paul describes the universal sinfulness of mankind in terms of the story of the disobedience Adam and Eve as we read in Genesis 2-3. And then he gives God's antidote: the free gift of forgiveness that makes us right with God (justification) through the obedience of Jesus Christ in his life and death which were affirmed by God in the resurrection and exaltation.

Matthew 4:1-11 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Temptation of Jesus

4¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." 4 But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple 6 and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" 7 Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." 10 Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" 11 Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

COMMENT: Lent recalls the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness in preparation for his ministry. At the same time, we must recall that Matthew echoes the Old Testament passages in which both Moses and Elijah are said to have spent similar periods of fasting in the wilderness (Exodus 32:28; 1 Kings 19:8). As for them, so for Jesus; the sojourn in the wilderness involved a deep spiritual experience. Our word 'devil' translates the Greek 'diabolos' which originally meant 'accuser' or 'slandered'. In the Septuagint (LXX), it was used to translate the Hebrew word 'satan', meaning 'adversary'. By 200 BC the name 'Satan' had become the embodiment of evil and by New Testament times it had become synonymous with 'devil'. However the experience of his being tempted may be interpreted, Jesus had to make some very meaningful choices. How was he to carry out his mission? The three temptations were options he had to consider and reject because they were not God's will for him.

Had he chosen any of them, he would not be our Saviour and Lord. Sometimes we can be called to make ‘life choices’ in circumstances where there is a moral choice – will we choose the right path?

Psalm 32 *Beati quorum* Grail Psalter

℟℞ Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord, exult, you just!

¹ Happy the man whose offence is forgiven,
whose sin is remitted.

² O happy the man to whom the Lord
imputes no guilt,
in whose spirit is no guile. ℟℞

³ I kept it secret and my frame was wasted.
I groaned all day long,
⁴ for night and day your hand was heavy upon me.
Indeed my strength was dried up
as by the summer's heat. ℟℞

⁵ But now I have acknowledged my sins;
my guilt I did not hide.
I said: “I will confess
my offense to the Lord.”
And you, Lord, have forgiven
the guilt of my sin. ℟℞

⁶ So let every good man pray to you
in the time of need.
The floods of water may reach high
but him they shall not reach.

⁷ You are my hiding place, O Lord;
you save me from distress.
(You surround me with cries of deliverance.) ℟℞

⁸ I will instruct you and teach you
the way you should go;
I will give you counsel
with my eye upon you. ℟℞

⁹ Be not like horse and mule, unintelligent,
needing bridle and bit
else they will not approach you.

¹⁰ Many sorrows has the wicked
but he who trusts in the Lord,
loving mercy surrounds him. ℟℞

¹¹ Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord,
exult, you just!

O come, ring out your joy,
all you upright of heart.

✠ Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord, exult, you just!

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,**

**As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.**

COMMENT: This is a witness to the assurance of God's forgiveness for the penitent soul. It acknowledges both the universal sinfulness of humanity and the prevenient mercy of God (a grace that precedes even our willingness to repent or confess). **NOTE:** The term “prevenient grace” refers to a universal grace which precedes and enables the first stirrings of a good will or inclination toward God – he leads us to himself – we need to follow that lead.

Short Preface

And now we give you thanks because you give us the spirit of discipline, that we may triumph over evil and grow in grace, as we prepare to celebrate the paschal mystery with mind and heart renewed.

Post Communion

Lord God, you have renewed us with the living bread from heaven; by it you nourish our faith, increase our hope, and strengthen our love: teach us always to hunger for him who is the true and living bread, and enable us to live by every word that proceeds from out of your mouth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **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.**