

**Earlsdon Methodist Church
Sunday Worship
First Sunday in Lent
21st February 2021**

Theme: Worship – The Beloved

Greetings: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.



Come together to be God's people.
Come together and be yourselves.
Bring to God your joys and your struggles.
Bring to God your hopes and your fears.
Come together to be God's people,
and let us worship the living God. **Amen.**

Hymn 53 StF: How Shall I Sing That Majesty



Prayer of Adoration, Confession and Thanksgiving.

Loving, faithful God, your love is absolute, your promises irrevocable. We look up after a shower of rain, marvelling at the colourful beauty of your rainbow – a reminder of your promise and faithfulness to all generations. Wherever we happen to be – wilderness, mountain or valley bottom – your Holy Spirit is with us. We adore you, loving, faithful God. **Amen.**

Beloved Lord Jesus, you stepped from water to wilderness, from God's voice to the taunting voice of the enemy. In the wilderness of today's world, we face many enemies, many temptations. Forgive us for succumbing to selfishness, greed, lust, anger, power.

Lord most high, forgive us, we pray. Forgive us when our minds fail to focus on you and your word. Help us to remember that no matter what we are going through, you have been there before us. Whether we are swimming in the warm waters of your love, or

journeying through the arid wilderness, help us not to lose sight of your hand guiding us to eternal glory at rainbow's end.

Lord most high, forgive us, we pray.

Sometimes difficult times follow fast on the heels of one another. It gets hard to keep our focus on you. Forgive us. Help us not to wallow in selfish self-centredness, but to remember your promises and recognise you in those you bring alongside.

Lord most high, forgive us, we pray.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Lord Jesus Christ, you went from water to wilderness to suffering on the cross

..... Because of you, we are forgiven.

Praise be to Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

We thank you, faithful Lord, for your patience, provision and power; for your tenderness, trust and triumph; for your security and strength; for your compassion and wisdom. We thank you, Lord, that through your grace and mercy, the blessings of faith, and your covenant love, you equip, teach and guide us as we traverse today's world, ever mindful of your steadfast love. **Amen.**



Scripture

Genesis 9:8-17 & Mark 1:9-15

Reflection:

First Sunday in Lent

Today is the first Sunday of Lent, a season of deep worship, prayers, reflection and renewal. For our theme each week, we will use the four distinctive marks of methodism to which we are all called - worship, learning and caring, service, evangelism and conclude with the good news - a new covenant for all people. This Sunday, we shall reflect and explore 'Worship' in the context of how Jesus worshipped God His Father and His divine experiences as a result of worship.

Worship draws us closer to God; Worshiping together also draws us closer to each other as communion of saints and worshipping God can open the heavens and we experience the miraculous worship empowers us to overcome temptation, worship helps us cope when we find ourselves in the wilderness, worship leads us to reflect, repent and forgive others as well as ourselves, during worship, we are restored, renewed and strengthened by God's Holy Spirit.

Worship empowers us to overcome temptation: So typical of Mark, he emphasised the speed at which things happened so that God's power will be the main focus in the life of Jesus. He presented a scene - 'it is immediately after Jesus' baptism that he is 'driven' into the wilderness. Jesus' baptism shows God's affirmation of him as God's beloved Son. To heighten the suspense in this narrative, Mark then created a juxtaposition wherein Jesus Christ is the Son of God - a divine being, yet, in stark contrast, faced rigorous temptations in the wilderness. For Mark, Jesus' baptism prepared Him not only for his ministry but to face and overcome temptation.

Question: Why did Jesus' baptism empowered Him to overcome temptation?

Worship is a demonstration of obedience to God and so baptism is about a heart of worship that leads us to obey God because of our faith - a desire to do God's will. Baptism is also worship, it involves the Trinity in that God the Father was glorified, Jesus the Son was obedient to fulfil God's will and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus Christ like a dove and God the Father pronounced the blessing of baptism on Jesus His Son saying - "You are the Beloved, with you I am well pleased'. This is a powerful presentation of worship.

Question: Can you think of what your baptism mean regards your relationship with God?

The Spirit immediately drove Jesus Christ into the wilderness, Jesus was in the desert for 40 days, enduring temptation by Satan and at risk of being devoured by wild beast but an angel waited on Him. God was with Jesus Christ and so evil could not befall Jesus and Yes, Jesus Christ overcame temptation and defeated Satan.

Question: What is your experience of a wilderness?

It is about being in that place of discomfort, trials and tribulations which often leads to feeling of despair, brokenness, failure, rejection, guilt, sickness, betrayal, a refugee or immigrant, missionaries, itinerant ministers, etc. Nevertheless, like Jesus Christ, these experiences forces us to think of our own identity and our identity as a child of God. Hence knowing God and that we are loved by God this agape relationship may help us cope with our experiences of difficult wildernesses irrespective of what they might be.

A time to forgive: Jesus tells us 'the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is near, He calls us to repent and believe in the good news'. During this season of Lent, let us seek repentance - the ability to purge our hearts of all form of unforgiveness. Jesus taught His disciples to pray to the Father saying 'forgive us our sins as we forgive others who have sinned against us'. This is a deep form of worship as God's kingdom come to us when we pray the prayer of forgiveness and we forgive others.

A time to reflect and renew: God renewed His covenant with Noah and his sons by proclaiming earthly blessings upon them - be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and have dominion over all birds and animals and creepy things.

Question: Where else have you heard God speak these words?

In the creation story **Genesis 1: 26-30**, God uttered the same words after God created humankind - God renewed the same covenant with Noah and his sons as a sign that God does renew and restore us. Noah was a worshipper, he had a strong relationship with God, he built an altar to the Lord. (vs 20). An altar is a place of worship and there he offered sacrifices to God that 'pleased God and when the Lord smelt the pleasing odour, the Lord said in His heart', "I will never again curse the ground, nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done". (v 21). God sealed His covenant with the sign of a rainbow.

Beloved, during this season of Lent as we look and listen for God in scriptures, the Word and in the world far and near, let us reflect on how our worship gets us even closer to God. Let us listen to what God is saying - for some of us we may have to navigate life with added challenges, the church in the new normal and a world desperately in need of physical and spiritual healing. I pray God Almighty will renew and restore us in this season of repentance and sacrifice as we go forward in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Hymn 272 StF: From Heaven You Came Helpless Babe



As we walk into the long weeks of Lent, we begin a journey into the wilderness: may your Spirit rest upon us. We travel from suffering to hope, may your Spirit rest upon

We walk in our troubled world,
full of anxiety at the conflict we see -
bring your peace we pray.
We are aware of the finite resources of
our earth, may we limit our destructive
habits. As we look to the example of
Jesus, who lived in simplicity and trust,
and as we are asked again to follow him;
may we free ourselves from all that holds
us back, and trust in your promise that
you will never leave us, Your kingdom
comes near to those who call on your

us. We travel through death to new life, may your Spirit rest upon us.

As we look to the example of Jesus, who in the wilderness chose the difficult path, help us to know that you are with us though the way ahead may be hard, and we so often falter and fail, strengthen us for the journey ahead and teach us to trust in you. Your kingdom comes near to those who call on your name; your pathway is surrounded by love.

Teach us to walk in it

We pray for people in homes that are insecure and for people living in life threatening situation. We give thanks for the peace we experience and ask that our church communities can offer hope and safety for those in distress.

May we share what we have, and work to lift the burden that others carry.

As we look to the example of Jesus, who embraced all who were in pain, may we reach out to others in generosity and kindness.

Your kingdom comes near to those who call on your name; your pathway is surrounded by love.

Teach us to walk in it.

name; your pathway is surrounded by love.

Teach us to walk in it

We walk in separation, apart from friends and those we love: give us strength to endure in hope. We pray especially for all who are burdened by loneliness; for all who are in pain; for the bereaved and the despairing; the sick and the dying: may we work to make our communities places of warmth and friendship where all are included and each one finds a place. As we look to the example of Jesus, who welcomed the least and the lost and brought the overlooked into the light, may we extend our circle of belonging and believe that your love is big enough for all to enter in. Your kingdom comes near to those who call on your name; your pathway is surrounded by love.

Teach us to walk in it. Amen.



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 489 StF: All I Once Held Dear



Creator God, you made us in your image to be your people, wherever we go. This coming week, whatever we experience, wherever we find ourselves, help us to know that you are with us – guiding, revealing and sustaining – always. **Amen.**