First Sunday in Lent

Prayers for Returning to God

February 21, 2021 at 10:00 am

St. Mary’s Barnstable

In this image, God’s hands hold various animals and plant life, and are surrounded by the bands of the rainbow, shielding Creation from the swirling waters of chaotic destruction. I chose not to image humanity because the hands are at once God’s and ours. We must respond to God’s covenant by protecting and keeping the earth. It is our responsibility; it is our calling. God meets us where we are—utterly dependent and bound toward self destruction—with a promise sealed with a bow bursting with the endless spectrum of colors light holds.

Artist note by the Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman
Voluntary:

Welcome and Opening Sentences

Officiant:  God meets us in the night.
People:    Before the sun rises, Before the wound heals, Before there are answers, Before there is closure.

Officiant:  God meets us in the light.
People:    Where joy is effervescent, Where laughter is contagious, Where flowers bloom from cracks in the sidewalk, And where people gather around the table.

Officiant:  God meets us at the threshold.
People:    At the edge of the water, At the beginning of the wilderness, At the start of something new, On the edge of faith.

Officiant:  And if God meets us in all those places, Then surely God meets us in between.
People:    Staying with us through the wilderness.

Officiant:  We are not alone. God is all around.
People:    Let us worship the God of the here and now.

Opening Hymn

THE GLORY OF THESE FORTY DAYS

1. The glo-ry of these for-ty days We cel-e-
2. A- lone and fast-ing Mo-ses saw The lov-ing
3. So Dan-iel trained his mys-tic sight, De-liv-ered
4. Then grant that we like them be true, Con-sumed in
5. O Fa-ther, Son, and Spir-it blest, To you be

1. things were made, Him-self has fast-ed and has prayed.
2. fast-ing came The steeds and char-i-ots of flame.
3. friend, be-came The her-al-d of Mes-si-ah’s name.
4. with your grace, And give us joy to see your face.
5. Name a-dored, From age to age the on-ly Lord.

Text: LM; Clamor decus jurgiis; St. Gregory the Great, ca. 540–604; tr. in the English Hymnal, 1906;
adapt. by Johann Sebastian Bach, 1685-1750, alt.
Confession

Officiant: Again and again, God meets us where we are. God’s love knows no bounds, which is hard for us to understand and easy for us to forget. Therefore, in confession we remember together that we are not alone. And in a unified voice, we once again ask for God’s grace in that holy reminder. Please pray with me.

Officiant: God who meets us where we are—There is nowhere we can go that you are not.
People: You were with Jesus at his baptism. You were with him in the wilderness, And even in between, you were there, Saying aloud, “This is my beloved.”

Officiant: We know that you are with us too—In the good, the bad, and everything in between—But so often we act like we are alone.
People: Instead of coming to you with our hurt, We hold it in or cast it onto others. Instead of coming to you with our joy, We credit ourselves and offer you nothing.

Officiant: How can we long for a deeper relationship with you While living like you are nowhere to be found?
People: Forgive our self-centered ways. Remind us that in every breath, in every step, you are there.

Officiant: You are the God who meets us where we are.
People: Before and behind, above and below, within and around. Amen.

Words of Forgiveness

Officiant: My friends, if you hear nothing else today, hear this: God is here. God sees you. God knows you. God meets you at the edge of every new beginning, And God calls you beloved.
People: We are washed by the water. We are called beloved. Thanks be to God for a love like that!

Collect of the Day

Officiant: The Lord be with you.
People: And also with you.
Officiant: Let us pray.

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination

Holy God, If I am honest, faith often feels like water in my hands. No matter how hard I try to hold onto it, some of it always slips through—Like droplets of truth running down my wrists, back toward my heart. This human inability to hold onto you leaves me thirsty for more. So as we prepare to read scripture, I pray that once again, you would meet us here. Meet us in our hope and our heartache. Meet us in our fear and our joy, Meet us in our cupped hands and clenched fists. And even if the water keeps running, And we do not have a sky-parting moment of clarity, Or a tangible sense that you are near; Even if we do not hear the words, “This is my beloved,” Ringing in our ears, We will trust that you are near, Always and forever meeting us here, Running toward our hearts. Gratefully we pray, Amen.
The First Lesson

God said to Noah and to his sons with him, “As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your
descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every
animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again
shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is
with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant
between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will
remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall
never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the
everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” God said to Noah,
“This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

Reader: The Word of the Lord.
People: Thanks be to God.

Psalm 25: 1-9 (responsively by whole verse)

1 To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul; my God, I put my trust in you; *
   let me not be humiliated, nor let my enemies triumph over me.

2 Let none who look to you be put to shame; *
   let the treacherous be disappointed in their schemes.

3 Show me your ways, O LORD, *
   and teach me your paths.

4 Lead me in your truth and teach me, * for you are the God of my salvation;
   in you have I trusted all the day long.

5 Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love, *
   for they are from everlasting.

6 Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; * remember me according to your
   love and for the sake of your goodness, O LORD.

7 Gracious and upright is the LORD; *
   therefore he teaches sinners in his way.

8 He guides the humble in doing right *
   and teaches his way to the lowly.

9 All the paths of the LORD are love and faithfulness *
   to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

The Second Lesson

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 persons, 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.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.
People: Thanks be to God.
**Sequence Hymn (sung by all)**

1 Baptized in water,  
sealed by the Spirit  
cleansed by the blood of Christ our king;  
heirs of salvation,  
trusting his promise -  
faithfully now God's praise we sing.

2 Baptized in water,  
sealed by the Spirit,  
marked with the sign of Christ our king;  
born of one Father,  
we are his children -  
joyfully now God's praise we sing.

Michael Saward (born 1932)

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**The Gospel**

Mark 1: 9-15

Gospeller: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.

People: **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

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 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.”


People: **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

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**Sermon**

The Rev. Dr. Libby Gibson

**Affirmation of Faith (Officiant and People say together)**

We believe in a God who is everywhere and right here,  
Bigger than the sky and in the smallest details,  
All at once and in every moment.

We believe that God meets us where we are –  
In heartbreak and high hopes,  
Around crowded tables and in quiet homes,  
In joy and in suffering,  
In loneliness and in connection,  
In sanctuaries and in living rooms,  
In grocery stores and in waiting rooms.

We believe that nothing we do or leave undone  
Can distance us from God’s love.  
God is forever drawing us close and pulling us in.  
Again and again, God meets us where we are  
And invites us into wholeness. Thanks be to God for a love like that.
The Prayers

Officiant: Together let us pray as Jesus taught us.

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, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Versicles

Officiant  Show us your mercy, O Lord;
People    And grant us your salvation.
Officiant  Clothe your ministers with righteousness;
People    Let your people sing with joy.
Officiant  Give peace, O Lord, in all the world;
People    For only in you can we live in safety.
Officiant  Lord, keep this nation under your care;
People    And guide us in the way of justice and truth.
Officiant  Let your way be known upon earth;
People    Your saving health among all nations.
Officiant  Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten;
People    Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.
Officiant  Create in us clean hearts, O God;
People    And sustain us with your Holy Spirit.

Prayers of the People

Petition: Spirit, take us where we need to go;
Response: And help us resist the temptations of this world.

Please join us in praying for:
Please join us in praying for professionals on the front line:
Jennifer Babcock, Michelle Babcock, Chris Flynn, Rebecca Graziano, Andy Huther, Bill Huther, Katie Huther, Kelcie & Kenneth Knowles, David Mason, Tom McKean, Rosa Ramirez-Mendez, Diane Munsell, Kimberley Schoener, Jeff Spillane, Jonathan Stackhouse, Kari Steinetz, Kelsey Rezendes, Mary Tempesta, Beatrix Walters, Wendy Young, Brian, Shawn.

Be Our Way, Our Truth, Our Life by John Harvey and Millicent

Lord Jesus, desert dweller, help us now, at this time of Lent, to accompany you.
If we have grown soft, cushioning our lives with excuses, expose us to the toughness of your way.
If we have grown lazy, cushioning our minds with easy, thin thoughts, expose us to the rigor of your truth. If we have grown comfortable, cushioning our living with satisfaction and success, expose us to the challenge of your life. As we walk, God, be our way. As we learn, God, be our truth. As we grow God, be our life. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen

Marked By A Cross by Ruth Burgess

Officiant: Marked by a cross, cherished and forgiven
People: We are travelling home

Officiant: Called to be holy, called to be happy
People: We are travelling home

Officiant: Across deserts, over mountains
People: We are travelling home

Officiant: God in our hearts, God in our lives
People: We are travelling home

Closing Hymn (verses 1,3,4,5) St. Flavian

1 Lord, who throughout these forty days for ty days for us didst fast and pray,
2 As thou with Sa tan didst con tend and didst the vic tory win,
3 As thou didst hun ger bear and thirst, so teach us, gra cious Lord,
4 And through these days of pen i tence, and through thy Pas sion tide,
5 A bide with us, that so, this life of suf fer ing o ver past,

1 teach us with thee to mourn our sins, and close by thee to stay.
2 O give us strength in thee to fight, in thee to con quer sin.
3 to die to self, and chief ly live by thy most ho ly word.
4 yea, ev er more, in life and death, Je sus! with us a bide.
5 an Easter of un end ing joy we may at tain at last!
**Lenten Blessing**

As we move from this time of prayer,
May your mouth speak of God’s goodness.
May your arms hold those in need.
May your feet walk toward justice.
May your heart trust its worth.
May your soul dance in God’s grace.
And may this be your rhythm—
Again and again and again,
Until God’s promised day.
In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself,
Go with courage, go with heart, go in peace.
Amen.

**Dismissal**

Deacon    Let us bless the Lord.
People    Thanks be to God.

**Announcements**

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_Our worship resources are drawn from the booklet Ashes to Eggs, published by Wild Goose Publications at Iona Abbey and “A Sanctified Art” Lenten Bundle. The cover art is courtesy of A Sanctified Art._