



Le Carême 2023

Je ne connais pas cet homme

I don't know him

Ik ken Hem niet eens

*Holy Trinity Pro-cathedral
Brussels
Meditations*

Lent 2023

List of readings

Wednesday 22 February	Ash Wednesday (Principal Holy Day)	Psalm 51.1-18	Joel 2.1-2,12-17	2 Corinthians 5.20b - 6.10	Matthew 6.1-6,16-21
Thursday 23 February	Polycarp, bishop, martyr, c. 155 (Lesser Festival)	Psalm 77	Jeremiah 2.14–32	Galatians 2.11-21	John 4.1-26
Friday 24 February		Psalm 3	Jeremiah 3.6–22	Galatians 3.1-14	John 4.27-42
Saturday 25 February		Psalm 71	Jeremiah 4.1-18	Galatians 3.15–22	John 4.43–54
Sunday 26 February	First Sunday of Lent	Psalm 32	Genesis 2.15–17; 3.1–7	Romans 5.12–19	Matthew 4.1–11
Monday 27 February	George Herbert, priest, poet, 1633 (Lesser Festival)	Psalm 11	Jeremiah 4.19–31	Galatians 3.23-4.7	John 5.1–18
Tuesday 28 February		Psalm 44	Jeremiah 5.1–19	Galatians 4.8–20	John 5.19–29
Wednesday 1 March	David, bishop, patron of Wales, c. 601 (Lesser Festival)	Psalm 6	Jeremiah 5.20–31	Galatians 4.21–5.1	John 5.30–47
Thursday 2 March	Chad, bishop, missionary, 672 (Lesser Festival)	Psalm 42	Jeremiah 6.9–21	Galatians 5.2–15	John 6.1–15
Friday 3 March		Psalm 22	Jeremiah 6.22–30	Galatians 5.16–26	John 6.16–27
Saturday 4 March		Psalm 63	Jeremiah 7.1–20	Galatians 6	John 6.27-40
Sunday 5 March	Second Sunday of Lent	Psalm 121	Genesis 12.1–4a	Romans 4.1–5, 13–17	John 3.1–17
Monday 6 March		Psalm 32	Jeremiah 7.21–34	Hebrews 1	John 6.41-51
Tuesday 7 March	Perpetua, Felicity and companions, martyrs, 203 (Lesser Festival)	Psalm 50	Jeremiah 8.1–15	Hebrews 2.1-9	John 6.52-59
Wednesday 8 March	Edward King, bishop, 1910 (Lesser Festival)	Psalm 35	Jeremiah 8.18–9.11	Hebrews 2.10-18	John 6.60-71
Thursday 9 March		Psalm 34	Jeremiah 9.12–24	Hebrews 3.1–6	John 7.1–13
Friday 10 March		Psalm 41	Jeremiah 10.1–16	Hebrews 3.7–19	John 7.14–24
Saturday 11 March		Psalm 25	Jeremiah 10.17–24	Hebrews 4.1–13	John 7.25–36
Sunday 12 March	Third Sunday of Lent	Psalm 95	Exodus 17.1–7	Romans 5.1–11	John 4.5–42
Monday 13 March		Psalm 7	Jeremiah 11.1–17	Hebrews 4.14–5.10	John 7.37–52
Tuesday 14 March		Psalm 9	Jeremiah 11.18–12.6	Hebrews 5.11–6.12	John 7.53–8.11
Wednesday 15 March		Psalm 38	Jeremiah 13.1–11	Hebrews 6.13–20	John 8.12–30
Thursday 16 March		Psalm 56	Jeremiah 14	Hebrews 7.1–10	John 8.31–47
Friday 17 March	Patrick, bishop, missionary, patron of Ireland, c. 460 (Lesser Festival)	Psalm 22	Jeremiah 15.10–21	Hebrews 7.11–28	John 8.48–59
Saturday 18 March		Psalm 31	Jeremiah 16.10–17.4	Hebrews 8	John 9.1–17
Sunday 19 March	Mothering Sunday (Festival)	Psalm 34.11-20	1 Samuel 1.20-28	2 Corinthians 1.3-7	Luke 2.33-35
Monday 20 March	Joseph of Nazareth (Festival)	Psalm 89.26-36	2 Samuel 7.4–16	Romans 4.13–18	Matthew 1.18–25
Tuesday 21 March	Thomas Cranmer, archbishop, Reformation martyr, 1556 (Lesser Festival)	Psalm 79	Jeremiah 18.1–12	Hebrews 9.15–28	John 10.1–10
Wednesday 22 March		Psalm 90	Jeremiah 18.13–23	Hebrews 10.1-18	John 10.11-21
Thursday 23 March		Psalm 86	Jeremiah 19.1–13	Hebrews 10.19–25	John 10.22–42
Friday 24 March		Psalm 102	Jeremiah 19.14–20.6	Galatians 4.1–5	John 11.1-16
Saturday 25 March	Annunciation of Our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary (Principal Feast)	Psalm 40.5–11	Isaiah 7.10–14	Hebrews 10.4–10	Luke 1.26–38
Sunday 26 March	Fifth Sunday of Lent (<i>Passiontide begins</i>)	Psalm 130	Ezekiel 37.1–14	Romans 8.6–11	John 11.1–45
Monday 27 March		Psalm 73	Jeremiah 21.1–10	Hebrews 11.17–31	John 11.28–44
Tuesday 28 March		Psalm 35	Jeremiah 22.1–5, 13–19	Hebrews 11.32–12.2	John 11.45–57
Wednesday 29 March		Psalm 55	Jeremiah 22.20–23.8	Hebrews 12.3-13	John 12.1-11
Thursday 30 March		Psalm 40	Jeremiah 23.9–32	Hebrews 12.14-29	John 12.12-19
Friday 31 March		Psalm 22	Jeremiah 24	Hebrews 13.1–16	John 12.20–36a
Saturday 1 April		Psalm 23	Jeremiah 25.1–14	Hebrews 13.17–25	John 12.36b–50
Sunday 2 April	Palm Sunday (<i>Liturgy of the Passion</i>)	Psalm 31.9-16	Isaiah 50.4-9a	Philippians 2.5-11	Matthew 26.14-27.66
Monday 3 April	Monday of Holy Week	Psalm 41	Lamentations 1.1-12a	Colossians 1.18-23	Luke 22.1-23
Tuesday 4 April	Tuesday of Holy Week	Psalm 27	Lamentations 3.1-18	Galatians 6.11-18	Luke 22.24-53
Wednesday 5 April	Wednesday of Holy Week	Psalm 102	Jeremiah 11.18-20	Revelation 14.18-15.4	Luke 22.54-71
Thursday 6 April	Maundy Thursday (Principal Holy Day)	Psalm 42	Leviticus 16.2-24	Ephesians 2.11-18	Luke 23.1-25
Friday 7 April	Good Friday (Principal Holy Day)	Psalm 69	Lamentations 5.15–22	Hebrews 10.1–10	John 19.38-42
Saturday 8 April	Easter Eve	Psalm 31.1-4,15-16	Job 14.1-14	1 Peter 4.1-8	Matthew 27.57-66
Sunday 9 April	Easter Day (Principal Feast)	Psalm 118.1-2,14-24	Jeremiah 31.1–6	Acts 10.34-43	John 20.1-18

How to use this book

Follow the 'Daily Prayer'.

Read the bible passages and then the meditation.

Pray, tell God how you felt about the reading and share the concerns of your life with him.

Maybe you will continue the habit after Lent.



Comment utilisez ce livre

Suivez le 'Prière Quotidienne'.

Lisez les passages bible et après la méditation.

Priez, dites à Dieu que vous avez ressenti à propos de la lecture et de partager les préoccupations de votre vie avec lui.

Peut-être que vous allez continuer l'habitude après le Carême.

Daily Prayer

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. Luke 4.1-2

Now is the healing time decreed
For sins of heart, of word or deed,
When we in humble fear record
The wrong that we have done the Lord. (*Latin, before 12th century*)

Read: Read the Bible passage. Read the meditation

Pray: Talk to God about what you have just read. Tell him your concerns - for yourself, your family, our church family, our world. Praise him.

Pray the collect for the week – see next pages.

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.*

Prière Quotidienne

Jésus, rempli de l'Esprit Saint, revint du Jourdain et le Saint-Esprit le conduisit dans le désert où il fut tenté par le diable durant quarante jours. Luc 4.1-2

Maintenant le temps de la guérison est décrété
Pour les péchés du cœur, de la parole et des actes,
Lorsque nous nous souvenons avec humilité
Le mal que nous avons fait au Seigneur.

Lire : Lisez le passage de la Bible. Lisez la méditation.

Prier : Parlez avec le Seigneur de ce que vous avez lu. Parlez-lui de vos préoccupations pour vous-même, votre famille, notre famille de l'église, notre monde. Louez-le.

Priez la collecte pour la semaine. Voyez les pages suivantes

*Mon âme, bénis le Seigneur ! Que tout qui est en moi bénisse son saint nom.
Mon âme, bénis le Seigneur, et n'oublie aucun de ses bienfaits !*

The Collects for Lent

Ash Wednesday Holy God, our lives are laid open before you: rescue us from the chaos of sin and through the death of your Son bring us healing and make us whole in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

First Sunday Heavenly Father, your Son battled with the powers of darkness, and grew closer to you in the desert: 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. Amen.

Second Sunday Almighty God, by the prayer and discipline of Lent may we enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings, and by following in his Way come to share in his glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Third Sunday Eternal God, give us insight to discern your will for us, to give up what harms us, and to seek the perfection we are promised in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mothering Sunday God of love, passionate and strong, tender and careful: watch over us and hold us all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Fifth Sunday Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world: grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory; 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

Palm Sunday until Maundy Thursday True and humble king, hailed by the crowd as Messiah: grant us the faith to know you and love you, that we may be found beside you on the way of the cross, which is the path of glory. Amen.

Good Friday Eternal God, in the cross of Jesus we see the cost of our sin and the depth of your love: in humble hope and fear may we place at his feet all that we have and all that we are, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Easter Eve (Holy Saturday) In the depths of our isolation we cry to you, Lord God: give light in our darkness and bring us out of the prison of our despair; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Easter Day Risen Christ, for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred: open the doors of our hearts, that we may seek the good of others and walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace, to the praise of God the Father. Amen.

Les Collectes de Carême

Mercredi des Cendres Dieu très saint, nos vies sont ouvertes devant toi : sauve-nous du chaos du péché, et par la mort de ton Fils, apporte-nous la guérison et la plénitude en Jésus Christ notre Seigneur. Amen.

Premier dimanche Père Céleste, ton Fils a lutté contre les forces des ténèbres, et il s'est approché de toi dans le désert : aide-nous pendant ces jours à croître dans la sagesse et dans la prière pour que nous puissions témoigner de ton amour rédempteur en Jésus Christ notre Seigneur. Amen.

Deuxième dimanche Dieu tout puissant, par la prière et la discipline du Carême laisse-nous entrer dans le mystère de la souffrance du Christ, et en marchant dans son Chemin permets-nous de partager sa gloire, par Jésus-Christ notre Seigneur. Amen.

Troisième dimanche Dieu éternel, ouvre nos yeux pour que nous puissions discerner ta volonté pour nous, aide-nous à renoncer à ce qui nous fait du mal, et à chercher la perfection qui nous est promise en Jésus-Christ notre Seigneur. Amen.

Le dimanche de la Fête des mères¹ Dieu d'amour, passionné et fort, tendre et attentif : veille sur nous et protège-nous tous les jours de notre vie, par Jésus-Christ notre Seigneur. Amen.

Cinquième dimanche Dieu miséricordieux, qui par la mort et la résurrection de ton fils Jésus Christ a délivré et sauvé le monde : fais que, par la foi en lui qui a souffert sur la croix, nous triomphions dans le pouvoir de sa victoire, au nom de Jésus Christ, notre Seigneur. Amen.

Dimanche des Rameaux jusqu'à jeudi saint Roi humble et vrai, salué par la foule comme le Messie : accorde-nous la foi pour te connaître et pour t'aimer, pour que nous puissions nous trouver à côté de toi sur le chemin de la croix, qui est le chemin de la gloire. Amen.

Vendredi saint Dieu éternel, dans la croix de Jésus nous voyons ce que notre péché t'a coûté et aussi la profondeur de ton amour : en toute humilité, avec espoir et crainte, nous venons déposer à ses pieds tout ce que nous avons et tout ce que nous sommes, par Jésus-Christ notre Seigneur. Amen.

Veille de Pâques (samedi saint) Dans les profondeurs de notre isolement nous crions vers toi, Seigneur Dieu : fais briller ta lumière dans nos ténèbres et fais-nous sortir de la prison de notre désespoir, par Jésus-Christ notre Seigneur. Amen.

Le jour de Pâques Christ ressuscité, pour qui aucune porte n'est verrouillée, aucune entrée barrée : ouvre les portes de nos cœurs, afin que nous puissions rechercher le bien des autres et marcher sur le chemin joyeux du sacrifice et de la paix, à la louange de Dieu le Père. Amen.

¹ Dans la liturgie officielle de l'Église d'Angleterre, le dimanche de la Fête des mères peut être célébré de préférence à ce qui est prévu pour le quatrième dimanche de carême. Les habitants du Royaume-Uni observent le dimanche de la Fête des mères depuis quatre cents ans. La fête des mères est célébrée en Belgique le deuxième dimanche de mai et repose sur une tradition importée des États-Unis il y a seulement cent ans.

Wednesday 22 February, Ash Wednesday (Principal Holy Day)

Psalm 51.1-18 | Joel 2.1-2,12-17 | 2 Corinthians 5.20b - 6.10 | Matthew 6.1-6,16-21

Psaumes 51.2-19 | Joël 2.1-2,12-17 | 2 Corinthiens 5.20b - 6.10 | Matthieu 6.1-6,16-21

God's favour ~ La faveur de Dieu

For he says,

In the time of my favour I heard you,

and in the day of salvation I helped you.'

I tell you, now is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation².

Car il dit :

Au temps favorable je t'ai exaucé,

Au jour du salut je t'ai secouru[a].

Voici maintenant le temps favorable, voici maintenant le jour du salut³

Le carême n'est pas toujours compris comme 'temps favorable' lorsque nous sentons les cendres imposées sur nos fronts ou nous nous engageons dans une nouvelle discipline ; ni peut-être lorsque nous voyons comment Paul décrit ses propres expériences à l'Église sceptique de Corinthe.

Mais, tout au long de la liste des hauts et des bas de sa vie, Paul insiste sur le fait que le Saint-Esprit, la puissance de Dieu, était à l'œuvre et que, bien que n'ayant rien, il savait qu'il possédait toutes choses en Christ.

La lecture du Sermon sur la Montagne (Mt 6.19-21) nous offre également la récompense de Dieu lorsque, pendant le Carême, nous fixons nos cœurs et nos esprits, non pas sur les incertitudes de la terre (il y en a beaucoup) mais plutôt sur les trésors du ciel.

Tout au long de ce Carême, que Dieu vous bénisse, vous garde et vous montre sa faveur.

Lent doesn't always sound like a time of God's favour as we feel the ash imposed on our foreheads or as we take on a new spiritual discipline; nor perhaps as we see how Paul describes his own experiences to the sceptical Corinthian Church.

But scattered through Paul's list of both the ups and downs of his life he insists that the Holy Spirit, the power of God was at work; that despite having nothing, he knew he had everything in Christ.

The reading from the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 6.19-21) also offers God's reward to us as, in Lent, we focus our hearts and minds, not on the uncertainties on earth, (there are so many) but rather on the treasures of heaven.

This Lent, may God bless you and keep you and show you his favour.

John Wilkinson

² 2 Corinthians 6.2, Holy Bible, New International Version® Anglicized, NIV® Copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011

³ 2 Corinthiens 6.2, Nouvelle Edition de Genève Copyright © 1979 by Société Biblique de Genève

Thursday 23 February, Polycarp, bishop, martyr, c. 155 (Lesser Festival)

Psalm 77 | Jeremiah 2.14–32 | Galatians 2.11-21 | John 4.1-26

Psaumes 77 | Jérémie 2.14–32 | Galates 2.11-21 | Jean 4.1-26

Water, water

Both the readings of Jeremiah and John evoke a theme of water.

Throughout Jeremiah [2.14-32] God is strongly rebuking the people of Israel for wandering and straying to other beliefs; and not remaining loyal to Him.

“What do you think you will gain by going to Egypt to drink water from the Nile?

What do you think you will gain by going to Assyria to drink water from the Euphrates?⁴”

The bitter disappointment is felt: “I planted you like a choice vine from the very best seed. But look what you have become!”

The message is clear and is stated in the beginning: “Israel, you have brought this on yourself!

You deserted me, the Lord your God, while I was leading you along the way.”

How often have we lost track of where God wants to lead us, and we decide to go our way? Do we find ‘comforts’ in avenues other than God's Word?

As reflected upon in a recent study, Ezekiel 8 points us to areas where ‘hidden idols’ may be ‘worshipped’, away from public view... How does this translate to current life...? retail 'therapy', wishing for bigger living space or even higher wages? Do these seemingly comforting beacons in fact only act as a blanket to cover our innermost insecurities which convey a desire for greater power and security?

The Gospel's story of Jesus and the Samaritan Woman [John 4.1-26] provides the sustaining message that God's Spirit is the water that quenches all thirsts (..and needs). In fact, Jesus reveals Himself [to the Samaritan woman] as Living Water.

“.. but whoever drinks the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring which will provide him with life-giving water and eternal life.” The Samaritan woman was ready to believe this stranger was in fact the Messiah, as Jesus himself revealed: “I am he, I who am talking with you.”

The void left in our lives by our cravings for fulfilment are fulfilled by the Living Water. Christ is the Light and Joy that we long for in our souls.

And finally, filled with this Gift, we can also worship as God intended us to:

“.. by the power of the God's Spirit people will worship the Father as he really is, offering him the true worship that he wants. God is spirit and only by the power of his Spirit can people worship him as he really is.”

As reminded in this evening's service⁵, God provides HOPE and he is in Control. As a reflection I saw the road ahead that I am meant to take, with God's support.

Who was Polycarp?

Polycarp was a personal disciple of the Apostle John. In his later years, he was the bishop of the Church at Smyrna in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). Bishop Polycarp provided an historical example of Christian resistance pressured to renounce faith and God in favour of other gods, in exchange for preservation of life. With uncanny parallels to Christ's crucifixion, and the grace with which Bishop Polycarp accepted his fate, prepares us for the upcoming reading of God's sacrifice for us.

(from <https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/who-was-polycarp.html>)

Sara Nigro

⁴ Good News Translation® (Today's English Version, Second Edition) © 1992 American Bible Society. All rights reserved. For more information about GNT, visit www.bibles.com and www.gnt.bible. Good News Translation.

⁵ 12th February. Recording available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ycuig5otLq8>)

Friday 24 February

Psalm 3 | **Jeremiah 3.6–22** | Galatians 3.1-14 | John 4.27-42

Psaumes 3 | **Jérémie 3.6–22** | Galates 3.1-14 | Jean 4.27-42

With our whole heart

Israel has been unfaithful to God, behaving like a prostitute. God hopes that she will return, but she does not.

Israel's false sister Judah sees all this and emulates Israel's faithless behaviour. She then does return to God, but “not with her whole heart”.



God then declares: “Faithless Israel has shown herself less guilty than false Judah”.

Israel and Judah are kingdoms, and there is doubtless a geopolitical dimension to this passage. Yet the images are very personal. They are depicted as sisters, to whom God is sometimes a father, sometimes a husband. Their relationships with God are intimate.

Returning to God after going astray cannot be just for show.

We are all sinners, and every time we turn to God we are also turning away from sin. But if this is done merely as an appearance, in order to look good to others or to ourselves, it will leave us more guilty than if we had remained mired in sin, but without falsely pretending to embrace God, just like Israel in her unfaithfulness was less guilty than Judah in her insincerity.

God will not be deceived, but if we try it we easily deceive ourselves. What is the difference between worshipping God falsely, and worshipping a false God? It might not be a very big difference.

Falsehood will not lead to finding the right way. Turning to God with our whole heart will lead us there.

Tommaso Besozzi

Holy Trinity Pro-cathedral, Brussels, Lent Meditations 2023

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Saturday 25 February

Psalm 71 | Jeremiah 4.1-18 | Galatians 3.15-22 | John 4.43-54

Psaumes 71 | Jérémie 4.1-18 | Galates 3.15-22 | Jean 4.43-54

Trusting God when exhausted



All his life the psalmist has experienced God's faithfulness, and he is full of praise (v 8). So, why the sudden plea that God continue to be faithful? as if God needs to be reminded that the psalmist will no doubt need him even more as he grows old and weak? When we feel particularly weak and vulnerable, we naturally have moments of fear and doubt. A sudden shadow can appear on the sunny landscape of our faith, causing our spiritual hearts to fear or skip a beat. We worry if everything will continue to be all right? Will God be there for us if we become more and more helpless? The psalmist's answer to his own momentary fears is full of faith in a righteous, powerful and loving God (vs 19-24). Not only will God continue to honour and help him, but the Holy one of Israel will also continue to use him, throughout his final days, to declare God's power to others. Trusting and taking time to praise God when exhausted, will take away our fears and doubts. We should lean on God's strength when we are helpless and remember God's faithfulness. We must never despair, but keep on expecting his help no matter how severe our limitations. Hope in him helps us to keep going and keep serving him. Amen

Ce psaume contient une prière formulée par une personne âgée (v 9) qui, face à des difficultés, demande à Dieu de la sauver de ses ennemis et de son affliction (vs 1-2, 18). Cette personne marche dans les voies de Dieu depuis son enfance (vs. 5, 6, 17) et a vécu des moments particulièrement difficiles durant sa vie (v 20). Malgré cela, elle continue d'avoir confiance en Dieu. Elle est déterminée à vivre le restant de sa vie avec la certitude que Dieu manifesterà encore sa puissance et sa bonté en elle. Amen

Grace West Adenekan

Sunday 26 February, First Sunday of Lent

Psalm 32 | Genesis 2.15–17; 3.1–7 | Romans 5.12–19 | Matthew 4.1–11

Psaumes 32 | Genèse 2.15–17; 3.1–7 | Romains 5.12–19 | Matthieu 4.1–11

A forest full of tempting trees

We follow in the footsteps of our two ancestors, Eve, mother of all the living, and Adam.

They faced one tree with beautiful but forbidden fruits.

I sometimes wonder whether we, nowadays Eves and Adams, wander in a huge forest full of tempting trees with most pleasing fruits. Isn't our western culture not full of temptation.....? Maybe more than ever indeed as our society is characterised by individualism and autonomy. Our self control is being weakened as we do what we like to do and we ourselves like to decide what is good for us. No interventions, please. We also live in a world where more is better. Commercials pushing us always further. A daily tsunami of information and messages preventing us from taking time off to think and be quiet.....

Temptation everywhere all the time.

May this be the result of the fact that an overwhelming majority of people no longer walk close with God, empowering the evil one even more.....?

Is there a way out of this forest full of tempting trees? Maybe best to look at how we get pulled in.

We know the evil one is most crafty. He starts very subtle with sowing doubts in our hearts ('Did God really say you can't eat of any tree in the garden?') resulting in hearts open for jealousy, discontentment, suspicion..... He plays with the truth questioning God's goodness and trustworthiness and covering up God's best intentions for us. And then when our hearts are full of doubts he throws in hard lies. It is then by paying extra attention to the forbidden tree and its beautiful fruits ('When the woman saw.....'), Eve is further being drawn into the path of temptation getting stuck in the devil's snare.

Before we know it, we become trapped in lies and darkness; we are in bondage and it's difficult to get out.

As for our hearts: trust out, fear in. Fear being one of the devil's most potent forces. And with fearful hearts our thoughts become fearful resulting in fear-motivated actions. The apple that looked soooooo delicious and healthy starts to make us rot from the inside out. We are being attacked physically, mentally and spiritually.

So be aware as we make the dangerous journey through the forest and be wise. Walk close with God to find delight in Him. Pray 'deliver me from the evil one' as Jesus taught us. Stay close to another. Pause regularly to become aware of your own weak spots. Dissociate yourself from these temptations. Take time out to become aware of what we fill our hearts with. Don't lose sight of God's reminder to live fearless everyday. (The phrase 'fear not' appears 365 times in the bible for a reason). And if and when despite all the good warnings we do end up in the dark side of the forest, trapped and strangled, be reminded and do remind one another that it was for them God sent his son to save.

Praise Him! Praise Him!

Janine Vrolijk

Monday 27 February, George Herbert, priest, poet, 1633 (Lesser Festival)

Psalm 11 | Jeremiah 4.19–31 | Galatians 3.23–4.7 | John 5.1–18

Psaumes 11 | Jérémie 4.19–31 | Galates 3.23-4.7 | Jean 5.1–18

The wrath of God

This day and its readings have turned my mind to the wrath and anger of God.

In Psalm 11.8 we read : “He will rain fiery coals and brimstone on the wicked; scorching winds will be the portion they drink.” And in Jeremiah 4.8 : “Therefore put on sackcloth, beat the breast and wail, for the fierce anger of the LORD is not averted from us.”

George Herbert, whose feast day it is today, writes (in his poem ‘Discipline’) :

*Throw away Thy rod,
Throw away Thy wrath;
O my God,
Take the gentle path!*

In John 5.14, we read about the crippled man, whom he had healed by the pool Bethesda : “A little later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, ‘Now that you are well, give up your sinful ways, or something worse may happen to you.’”

Lent is the time to become aware of where we have gone wrong, to feel sorry for what we should not have done or what we failed to do, and to resolve to do better. As the old prayer book puts it so strongly, “we acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed... provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us”. The Kenyan prayer book says, “We have done wrong and neglected to do right, our sins weigh heavily on our hearts.”

Lent is the time to find the way forward. Jesus healed and forgave the crippled man. Paul writes in Galatians 3.22-4.7 that we have been liberated from the punishment under the law by faith in Jesus, “born by a woman, born under the law, to buy freedom for those who were under the law, in order that we might obtain the status of sons” who can cry “Abba, Father.”

George Herbert ends his poem thus :

*Throw away Thy rod;
Though man frailties hath,
Thou art God :
Throw away Thy wrath!*

Isabelle Prondzynski

King of glory, king of peace, who called your servant George Herbert from the pursuit of worldly honours to be a priest in the temple of his God and king: grant us also the grace to offer ourselves with singleness of heart in humble obedience to your service; 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.

Tuesday 28 February

Psalm 44 | Jeremiah 5.1–19 | Galatians 4.8–20 | **John 5.19–29**

Psaumes 44 | Jérémie 5.1–19 | Galates 4.8–20 | **Jean 5.19–29**

Relations du Fils avec le Père

Les gens de l'église accusent Jésus de violer le sabbat, mais aussi de se faire égal de Dieu. Il était dans la peau de l'homme entièrement consacré et soumis à la volonté de Dieu son père. Pour nous sauver, le Seigneur Jésus était de même avis que son Père. Et dans la peau d'un homme, Il a accompli entièrement cette tâche dans une obéissance d'un fils parfait.

En vérité ; Il est le Fils de Dieu, Il est la vie et il donne la vie. « Celui qui croit en lui à la vie éternelle ». Jésus est le pain de vie. Grace à Jésus nous ressuscitons deux fois :

- La première résurrection et celle de la délivrance des pêches. Son sang sur la croix nous à ressuscité en nous redonnant la gloire que nous avons perdu à cause du péché.
- La deuxième résurrection est celle qui sera annonce par le retour de Jésus. Tous ceux qui sont mort vont ressusciter, ceux qui ont écouté et crus en Jésus vont ressusciter dans la joie pour vivre éternellement avec lui. Les autres qui sont reste dans le péché ressusciteront



dans la honte pour le jugement, tout comme révélé à Daniel 12.2-3 : « Plusieurs de ceux qui dorment dans la poussière de la terre se réveilleront, les uns pour la vie éternelle, et les autres pour l'opprobre, pour la honte éternelle. Ceux qui auront été intelligents brilleront comme la splendeur du ciel, et ceux qui auront enseigné la justice, à la multitude brilleront comme les étoiles, à toujours et à perpétuité. »

² Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever⁶.

Where do I stand, and what do I teach now, that will reward me on the day of resurrection?

Charles Kabera

⁶ Daniel 12.2-3. New International Version® Anglicized, NIV® Copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Wednesday 1 March, David, bishop, patron of Wales, c. 601 (Lesser Festival)

Psalm 6 | Jeremiah 5.20–31 | **Galatians 4.21–5.1** | John 5.30–47

Psaumes 6 | Jérémie 5.20–31 | Galates 4.21–5.1 | Jean 5.30–47

Be agents of peace

Having just returned from visiting the Holy Land with the MES (The Ministry Experience Scheme⁷) in Europe Study Pilgrimage, I cannot help but reflect on today's Epistle through the lens of the ongoing tension and conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians that I witnessed first hand. For both peoples claim the same land as their own as rightful heirs of Abraham, to whom God made a covenant to give the Promised Land (Genesis 12.7), through the two mothers mentioned in the text; the Israelis through Sarah, and the Palestinians through Hagar.

Paul reminds the Galatians that, as Christians, they are heirs of God's promises, recipients of his salvation, by grace, rather than by the law. Jesus, in His death and resurrection, has extended to us the former to free us from the latter. It is not our lineage, but our faith in Christ that matters.

Abiding in Jesus, then, we are free, but we exist in that state, so Paul makes clear, for the purposes of freedom. That is to say, we are free so that neither ourselves nor others should ever be burdened by slavery, by the yoke of conflict and oppression. Unfortunately that very yoke seems to lay heavily at the moment on many of the people in the land that God promised to Abraham, nor does any meaningful progress towards a peaceful settlement seem to lie on the horizon.

But Paul's words should remind us that by grace, God empowers us to be agents of peace and reconciliation. I had the pleasure to meet members of the World Council of Churches in Jerusalem who are striving to live out this vocation. We can support them, praying that God's peace may be known in that land.

Guido Bowen

Almighty God,
who called your servant David
to be a faithful and wise steward of your mysteries
for the people of Wales:
in your mercy, grant that,
following his purity of life and zeal for the gospel of Christ,
we may with him receive the crown of everlasting life;
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.

⁷ <https://europe.anglican.org/vocations/mes>

Thursday 2 March, Chad, bishop, missionary, 672 (Lesser Festival)

Psalm 42 | Jeremiah 6.9–21 | Galatians 5.2–15 | John 6.1–15

Psaumes 42 | Jérémie 6.9–21 | Galates 5.2–15 | Jean 6.1–15

Darkness

At our wedding this past January, Anna and I chose a song that contained the following lyrics:

*In the darkness God will keep me
He will stay and never sleep
In the darkness God is brighter
Though the night is long and deep⁸*

For me, this chorus speaks of a ‘darkness’ that is silent, perhaps even suffocating. But as we may all know, ‘darkness’ comes in many forms: stressful, chaotic, frustrating, doubtful, and several others. It’s in every form of darkness that today’s Psalm consistently reminds us to turn to the Lord, trust Him, and put our hope in Him.

Personally, the extent to which I find these reminders useful depends on the day. When I am being tested, I may have a tendency to forsake; when the waters are calm, I may not even be paying much attention to the Lord. In neither of these situations do I give the Lord what the Psalm advises: hope, joy, let along praise. But in both - through good times and in bad - God is no less present, no less compassionate, and no less benevolent. Seeing His presence, finding His compassion, and appreciating His kindness are challenges that I as a Christian face each and everyday, and today’s Psalm is a helpful reminder that no matter the difficulty level on a given day, it is always a good thing to praise the Lord.

It will never be easy. Darkness is everywhere, and knocks on the doors of some more often; others still receive it as a surprise in the mail. Even stronger is the kind of darkness that holds us back from seeing what the Lord has done - and continues to do - for us. Keeping the darkness at bay starts, however, with choosing God every morning, noon, and night. As today’s Psalm can teach us, one reminder can go a long way - and in our case, and that journey can start (or restart) today.

I pledge to start seeking out the Lord a little more - on my morning commute, in the coffee breaks, and even amidst the most intense moments. All are welcome, as always.

Benjamin Jance IV

Almighty God, from the first fruits of the English nation who turned to Christ, you called your servant Chad to be an evangelist and bishop of his own people: give us grace so to follow his peaceable nature, humble spirit and prayerful life, that we may truly commend to others the faith which we ourselves profess; 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.

⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBraI_mU1O4. <https://cityalight.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/The-Night-Song.pdf>.

Friday 3 March

Psalm 22 | Jeremiah 6.22–30 | Galatians 5.16–26 | John 6.16–27

Psaumes 22 | Jérémie 6.22–30 | Galates 5.16–26 | Jean 6.16–27

Give sorrow words

In Psalm 22, we hear Jesus crying out to God with his anguished lament of loss and feeling of abandonment on the cross, and at the same time remembering and acknowledging God's goodness and mercy.

The Psalms shatter the idea that being a Christian is an easy way to live, or a quick fix. Rather they describe the wide spectrum of real life, from mountain top experiences to walking in the valley in the shadow of death. They can help us to live wisely in difficult times.

Whereas we may be shy in expressing our real feelings, especially if we're going through a really hard time, I believe the Psalms can give us the courage to do so.

I remember well how difficult it was for me to really express my profound sorrow and grief following the death of my 23-year-old daughter, and just two months later the death of my mother. I was left feeling like a lone skittle standing on the Bowling alley, waiting to be knocked down. Or I felt as though I was in a very rough sea, repeatedly being tossed up onto a pebbly beach, only to be swept back into the depths. Somehow I managed to remain afloat, but it was thoroughly exhausting.

Rescue came in the form of discovering, as if by chance, a group for bereaved parents, The Compassionate Friends. My husband David and I were enabled to embark on an accompanied journey with the group and feeling free to 'say it how it was'. I was able to lament, truly express myself and be heard in my sorrow which brought great relief. I was able to 'give sorrow words'⁹ just as Shakespeare recommended. He was right. It was liberating.

Friends close to me at the time also found it hard to know what to say. In the face of such loss they were rendered lost for words. One very good friend actually abandoned me, and I never saw her again. It was a very challenging time, but I kept on keeping on, with the help and solidarity of The Compassionate Friends.

Now, some years later I am thankful for the Psalms reflecting the whole range of human emotions including lament, praise and thankfulness, and the value of 'giving sorrow words.'

I was enabled to go from lament to praise, and I am thankful.

Janet Sayers

⁹ Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break.
– William Shakespeare, Macbeth, Act 4, Scene 3.

Saturday 4 March

Psalm 63 | Jeremiah 7.1–20 | Galatians 6 | John 6.27-40

Psaumes 63 | **Jérémié 7.1–20** | Galates 6 | Jean 6.27-40

Fuyez le mal, pratiquez le bien

Jérémié, tout jeune, fut appelé par le Seigneur à être prophète. L'Éternel lui demande de transmettre un message fort à son peuple de Judas. Il lui demande de se tenir à la porte de l'église, et de dire à ce peuple que s'il adopte une bonne conduite en faisant le bien, il vivra en paix auprès de Dieu.

Il est demandé au peuple de :

- Rendre des jugements justes dans les procès
- De s'abstenir de l'exploitation de l'immigré, de l'orphelin et de la veuve
- Et de cesser d'adorer d'autres dieux.

Le prophète rappelle à la population les actes qu'elle commet et qui offensent l'Éternel, à savoir : les viols, les meurtres, les adultères, le culte à Baal et à d'autres dieux.

L'Éternel se demande comment ce peuple ose venir au temple, après tous ces méfaits. Il dit que son temple ne doit pas être une caverne de brigands.

Dieu sait que ce peuple a dépassé les limites et dit qu'il sera rejeté comme celui de Silo qui, lui aussi avait désobéi à Dieu.

L'Éternel demande à Jérémié de ne pas intercéder en faveur de ce peuple qui l'a offensé en se prosternant devant d'autres dieux et de ce fait la punition s'impose.

Qu'en est-il de nos jours dans nos églises et dans nos cœurs ? Le comportement de notre société est presque similaire à celui de ce peuple de Judas, malgré le temps qui nous sépare.

L'injustice, la violence, les guerres et l'immoralité sont toujours là. La plupart des gens vont à l'église ; mais leur cœur est éloigné de Dieu.

La Bible dit que le salaire du péché c'est la mort, la mort qui éloigne éternellement le pécheur de son Dieu. Mais celui qui croit en Dieu et en son fils qu'il a envoyé, Jésus Christ comme rançon expiatoire de nos péchés, ne connaîtra pas cette mort.

Maintenant que nous nous approchons de la période qui nous rappelle la mort et la résurrection de notre Seigneur, fuyons le mal et pratiquons le bien.

Samson Niyontegereje

Sunday 5 March, Second Sunday of Lent

Psalm 121 | Genesis 12.1–4a | Romans 4.1–5, 13–17 | **John 3.1–17**

Psaumes 121 | Genèse 12.1–4a | Romains 4.1–5, 13–17 | Jean 3.1–17

The night and the light

Has night fallen on your life? Do you feel, like Nicodemus, that you are wandering in the dark?



Many have pain and private sufferings, and no-one should doubt the severity of that darkness. The author of this Gospel is concerned to bring us, with Nicodemus, to the one who is ‘the light of the world’. Can you put to one side for a few minutes the question ‘why am I in the dark?’ and instead concentrate on being with Jesus, as Nicodemus did? Although Christ is ‘the true light come into the world’ he may still be hard to find. The light he gives may not be obvious, nor easy to see. You will need to trust that he is finding you. Like Nicodemus, listen to him. His words may not be simple or straight-forward, but they will be his gift for you. Receive them.

Ann Milton

Monday 6 March

Psalm 32 | Jeremiah 7.21–34 | Hebrews 1 | John 6.41-51

Psaumes 32 | Jérémie 7.21–34 | Hébreux 1 | Jean 6.41-51

La repentance

Ce psaume nous instruit beaucoup sur le pardon et sur la repentance. Dieu nous aime, nous qui sommes ses enfants. Et comme tout enfant nous apprenons à travers nos péchés, c'est pourquoi il est important de se repentir car le bonheur se trouve dans le pardon. Qu'il soit reçu ou donné, le pardon est une étape importante vers la paix et la réconciliation avec notre Seigneur.

La repentance est l'un des nombreux piliers de la religion chrétienne. Se repentir, pour moi, c'est aller vers Dieu pour se confesser et demander son pardon mais avec un cœur pur et une vraie sincérité et sans hypocrisie. Mais c'est non seulement aller vers lui mais aussi lui faire confiance et avoir foi en lui.

Ps 32.8, 10

« 8 Tu as dit : « Je t'instruirai, je t'indiquerai le chemin que tu devras emprunter, je serai ton conseiller, mes yeux veilleront sur toi....

10 Ils sont nombreux les tourments qui attendent les méchants, mais les hommes qui ont mis leur confiance en l'Éternel sont comblés par son amour.¹⁰ »



Nous ne sommes pas parfait bien que nous essayions de l'être, nous sommes et nous serons pêcheurs, personne n'en est exempté. C'est pourquoi la repentance fait partie de notre quotidien de croyant. Bien que la repentance peut être un passage difficile car nous prenons conscience qu'on a péché et déçu notre seigneur, ce moment peut aussi être un moment de restauration de soi et nous permettre d'être une meilleure personne.

Je finirai par ce verset qui me parle beaucoup et qui je l'espère aussi vous parlera.

1 Jean 1:9« Si nous confessons nos péchés, il est fidèle et juste pour nous les pardonner, et pour nous purifier de toute iniquité.¹¹ »

Innocent Nsengiyumva

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¹¹ Louis Segond (LSG). Public Domain.

Tuesday 7 March, Perpetua, Felicity and companions, martyrs, 203 (Lesser Festival)

Psalm 50 | Jeremiah 8.1–15 | Hebrews 2.1-9 | John 6.52-59

Psaumes 50 | Jérémie 8.1–15 | Hébreux 2.1-9 | Jean 6.52-59

Take a moment

“Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfil your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honour me.” (vs 14-15¹²)

“...would you know who is the greatest Saint in the world : It is not he who *prays* most, or *fasts* most ; it is not he who gives most *alms*, or is most eminent for temperance, chastity, or justice; but it is he who is *always thankful* to God, who *wills* everything that God *willeth*, who receives everything as an instance of God's goodness, and has a heart always ready to praise God for it.¹³”

When have you last been completely still, quieted your mind and your body, closed your eyes and thought of only ONE thing? In nowadays world, this is a great challenge. We are stimulated daily by a thousand little things that beg for our attention. But are these things worthy of our attention?

Today is a good day to take a MOMENT, and to consecrate it to God. To centre your thoughts completely on Him and to simply be thankful to Him. Visualize yourself in a place where you feel at peace: a certain spot in a forest where you sometimes go for walks, a beach, a mountain, your favourite easy chair... And in your mind's eye, place yourself in that spot, together with your heavenly Father. As soon as you're settled in and focused, start placing all the things that you are thankful for inside that image. Let them parade by in an endless pouring out of gratefulness to the Father. If your thoughts wander off, just gently bring them back, again and again. To focus only on this: all that you are thankful for.

In so doing, you bring praise to the Father and deepen your relationship with Him. And you may find that, in doing this exercise of gratefulness more frequently, your worries and anxieties fade to a mere little stain on the horizon of your life.

Sara Mäkipää-van Slooten

Holy God,
who gave great courage to Perpetua, Felicity and their companions:
grant that we may be worthy to climb the ladder of sacrifice
and be received into the garden of peace;
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

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¹³ A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life. http://www.ccel.org/ccel/law/serious_call.html. Law, William (1686-1761). Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library

Wednesday 8 March, Edward King, bishop, 1910 (Lesser Festival)

Psalm 35 | Jeremiah 8.18—9.11 | Hebrews 2.10-18 | **John 6.60-71**

Psaumes 35 | Jérémie 8.18—9.11 | Hébreux 2.10-18 | Jean 6.60-71

In it for the long haul?

Ever since I became a Christian believer (SO many years ago now!), I never cease to be challenged on the extent to which I enter intimacy with God, and on the call of discipleship that is very closely linked. God draws me in wonderfully to great moments of joy every now and then, and at other times I hesitate because I wonder if I am getting in too deep.....

Such seems to be what is echoed by our passage from the Gospel of John today. In previous verses, Jesus had made it very clear to his followers and others that he was to be seen as the “bread of life”, i.e. the person who is of such importance to the fundamentals of life that he needs to be engaged with at the core. The reaction is that many of his erstwhile followers drop away because they find this calling too much to respond to – and maybe because they find the analogy of “eating” Jesus like bread a bit strange and unpalatable.

But Jesus then goes on to clarify that the call is not a physical one but a supremely spiritual one, and it is from the Spirit that the best of life emerges. We need to believe – helped by God the Father, who is the enabler of a life of faith illuminated by the Spirit.

Perhaps Jesus is a little taken aback in the passage by the departure of so many, as he turns to his disciples to check that they do not want to leave too..... Peter turns the conversation around 180 degrees by affirming that, for him, Jesus’ words point to not only life, but to eternal life at that. Jesus is “the Holy one of God” according to Peter. How wonderful that Peter reaffirms Jesus’ true status at a time when so many had deserted the cause.

For me today, my spiritual food can be no other than Christ who satiates, but to whom we always come back for more, as in our daily eating habits. My prayer for all of us would be that indeed we would eat our fill of the Spirit, and allow ourselves to be nourished at the deepest levels by God’s ongoing presence.

Sue Bird

God of peace,
who gave such grace to your servant Edward King
that whomever he met he drew to Christ:
fill us, we pray, with tender sympathy and joyful faith,
that we also may win others to know the love that passes knowledge;
through him who is the shepherd and guardian of our souls,
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.

Thursday 9 March

Psalm 34 | Jeremiah 9.12–24 | Hebrews 3.1–6 | **John 7.1–13**

Psaumes 34 | Jérémie 9.12–24 | Hébreux 3.1–6 | Jean 7.1–13

Obey, seek, and be delivered

If we obey or repent and seek the Lord, we would certainly find Him, be forgiven and be delivered by God's mercy; that's what the bible says.

In Psalm 34 David exclaimed, "I sought the Lord and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears". God did not say that there will be no tribulations but He says call me and I will answer, ask it shall be given on to you. In our Psalms 34 it says, "The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing". We thank God for His promises of not going to abandon nor forsaking us.

No one is above temptation and disappointment. If Jesus Christ our model could be tempted by devil and be disappointed by His own brothers for not believing Him. In John 7.4 He has been mocked by His own brothers but in (v 6) He replied, "my time has not yet come,". Jesus Himself did not take God the Father for granted; He obeyed God's rules.

Power of prayer, most of us must have gone through tribulation once in life. Few years ago, I had to solve a problem of which I thought was minor, but during the process I realised how huge it was. At that period, I needed a document and I had to go to two different offices; the first office is where to get the document and the other is where to get it confirmed. I went to the first office where I supposed to get the document; the officer told me to first go to the second office, then I said, but I needed to get the document here before going to get it stamped at the other office; he said to me, madam, don't tell me how to do my job; just do what I have said. Reluctantly, I went to where he directed me. On getting there the other officer asked, where is the document to be signed? I explained to him what the other man said; he replied by saying that is impossible, go back and get the document from him and then come back to me for signature. It was then I realised that it was their way of saying no, they could not give me the document. When I realised that, I felt tired and frustrated. When I got back home, I cried to God, "God forgive me for not inviting you to this situation at the beginning, please I need your help because nothing is impossible for you." Some days later a friend called and said, he had just spoken with somebody about the issue of my document, and he thought they could sort it out. He added, just come with your ID to my office tomorrow. Few weeks later the document was signed.

The Almighty God says, ask you shall be given. If we do His will, He will abound with us.

Caroline Owoeye

Friday 10 March

Psalm 41 | Jeremiah 10.1–16 | Hebrews 3.7–19 | John 7.14–24

Psaumes 41 | Jérémie 10.1–16 | Hébreux 3.7–19 | Jean 7.14–24

God helps those who help the helpless

Blessed will be the believer who has regard for the weak. Those who show mercy to the helpless will receive mercy from God. Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Matt. 5.7). Being blessed means to know the happiness, contentment, and peace that only God can give. In addition, the LORD delivers such a merciful person in times of trouble. This was true of David as king. David’s defended the weak and poor, as later recorded by his son Solomon (Prov. 29.14; 31.8-9), and God defended him.



This psalm provides a model response for any believer who is undergoing the pain of deep trials. Humility, as demonstrated in David’s life, is highlighted as the leading virtue of the person who walks with God. With humility, believers should call upon God in every difficulty, yielding themselves to him. Those who trust God must show mercy to others if they expect to receive mercy from him. Jesus said, “Do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matt. 7.12). When betrayed, the righteous must seek the high road by showing mercy even when they are maligned.

Heureux celui qui se soucie du pauvre. S'il est dans le malheur, l'Éternel le délivre, l'Éternel le protège et préserve sa vie : il le rend heureux sur la terre.

Alice Amah

Holy Trinity Pro-cathedral, Brussels, Lent Meditations 2023

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Saturday 11 March

Psalm 25 | Jeremiah 10.17–24 | Hebrews 4.1–13 | John 7.25–36

Psaumes 25 | Jérémie 10.17–24 | Hébreux 4.1–13 | Jean 7.25–36

Put your trust in God

When I first read this psalm it spoke to me because today, Saturday the 11th of March, I will be playing in my brass band's annual big concert. Especially the first verse is applicable for today as before a concert I always put my trust in God to guide me in playing the pieces to please Him and the audience.

Also verses 16 and 17 spoke to me as my grandmother recently passed away and there are more lonely moments than before which she would definitely have filled. Now I have to put my trust in God to free me from all the troubles in my heart.

I also found comfort in listening to various adaptations of this psalm on YouTube. You might also find comfort in this version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BI9jcZYk>.



So let God take you by the hand and every road you'll travel will lead to Him.

Laat God je bij de hand nemen en elke weg die je zult bewandelen zal tot Hem leiden.

Jenny Freeman

Sunday 12 March, Third Sunday of Lent

Psalm 95 | Exodus 17.1–7 | Romans 5.1–11 | John 4.5–42

Psaumes 95 | Exode 17.1–7 | Romains 5.1–11 | Jean 4.5–42

In His hand

³ For the Lord is the great God,....

⁴ In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him¹⁴.

Have you ever had to climb up a snowy hill on skis? You'll know the effort it takes to slip and slide up the track, hot breath condensing in the cold air. After setting one foot in front of the other and plodding upwards, you turn around and see the view of the mountains and pine forests spread out in a panorama all around and just think: 'wow!'.



Or have you ever been on a boat in the middle of the sea, surrounded by water and waves and sky? I remember making coffee in the galley of a small boat with the sea pitching back and forth and having to clip myself to the stove with a body harness to be able to pour the hot water into a mug without falling over. Being surrounded by the enormity and beauty of nature can make us feel quite small and insignificant.

However, this Psalm reminds us that God - our God- made all of nature, in its enormity and beauty and power. What better reason to listen for His voice and to praise Him!

Katherine Prudhoe

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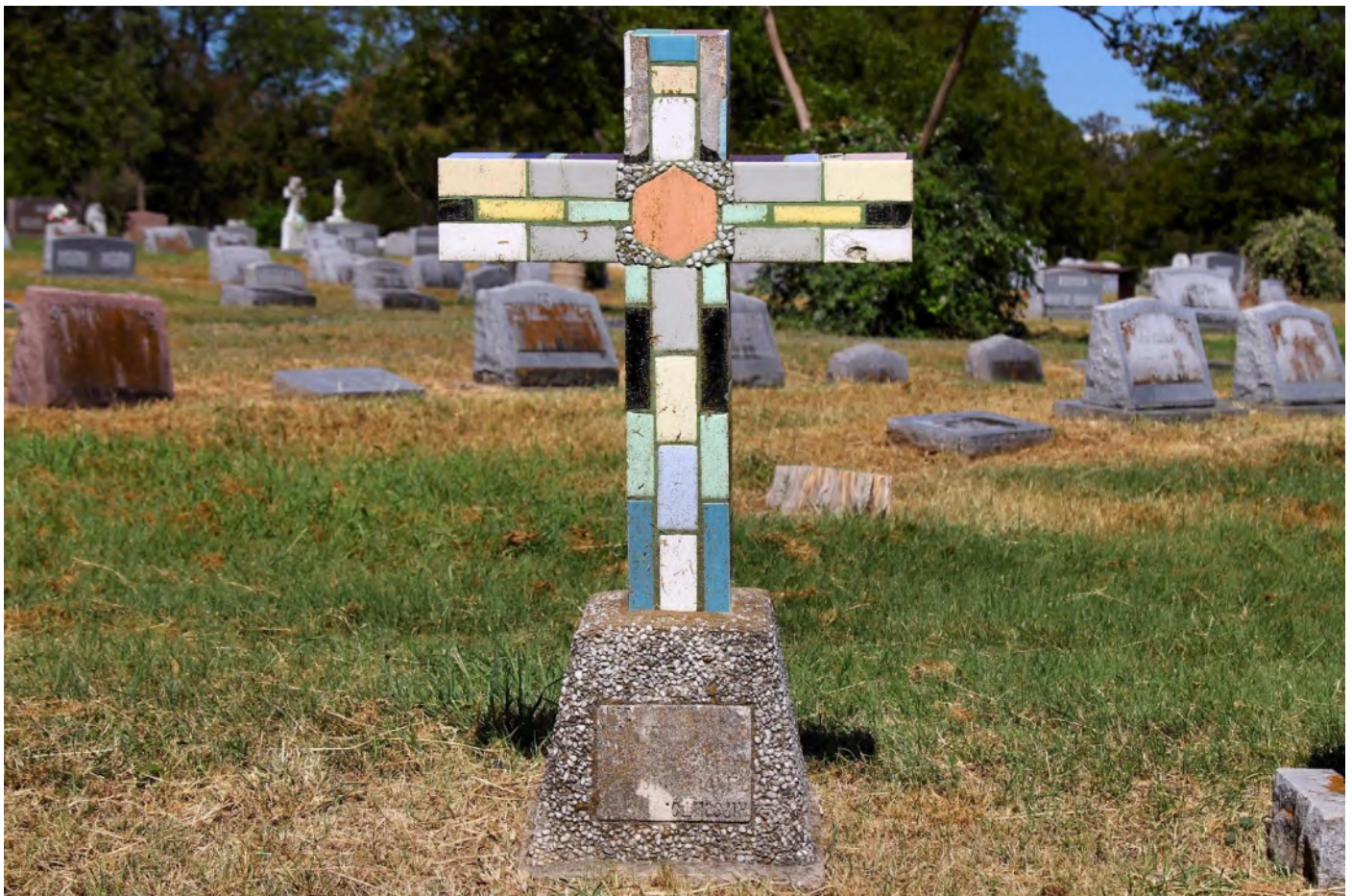
Monday 13 March

Psalm 7 | Jeremiah 11.1–17 | **Hebrews 4.14—5.10** | John 7.37–52

Psaumes 7 | Jérémie 11.1–17 | **Hébreux 4.14—5.10** | Jean 7.37–52

Rest in His presence/ Reposer auprès de Lui

Life afflicts us with many trials that we must overcome. Some are easier and some are more difficult, but in each of them God is with us, and Jesus has already overcome them through the cross.



He has already sacrificed himself for us, he has suffered the greatest afflictions of this world for us. Because of this, he understands us better than anyone else, and we can rest assured that we can rest in his presence. Amen.

La vie nous afflige par plusieurs épreuves que l'on doit surmonter. Certaines sont plus faciles et d'autres plus difficiles mais à chacune d'entre elles, Dieu est avec nous et Jésus les a déjà surmonté par la croix.

Il s'est déjà sacrifié pour nous, il a subi les plus grandes afflictions de ce monde pour nous. Par ce fait, il nous comprend mieux que quiconque et nous pouvons avoir l'assurance de pouvoir nous reposer auprès de lui. Amen.

Joséphine Kwaku

Tuesday 14 March

Psalm 9 | Jeremiah 11.18—12.6 | Hebrews 5.11–6.12 | John 7.53–8.11

Psaumes 9 | Jérémie 11.18—12.6 | Hébreux 5.11–6.12 | Jean 7.53–8.11

Dieu est une forteresse

Au premier abord, l'idée d'un Dieu qui juge le monde (v 9¹⁵) et qui efface le nom des ennemis pour toujours (v 6) peut sembler un peu déroutante, voire rebutante. Comme nos contemporains, nous préférons un Dieu réconfortant, qui pardonne toujours.

En Belgique nous jouissons des privilèges d'une société fondée sur des principes de justice, et bénéficions du fait d'être entourés de nations qui suivent ces mêmes principes. Mais les Israélites étaient entourés de nations beaucoup plus puissantes (l'Assyrie à l'est et l'Égypte au sud-ouest) qui n'hésitaient pas à profiter de leur pouvoir pour opprimer leur voisin.

De nos jours, nous n'avons pas besoin de regarder loin pour percevoir l'injustice : une guerre d'oppression, des ouvriers exploités, des chefs corrompus. A une plus petite échelle, nous avons peut-être subi l'injustice : un supérieur injuste au travail, un membre de notre famille malveillant, un accident dévastateur provoqué par un tiers... N'avons-nous envie que quelqu'un corrige les injustices dont nous souffrons ?

Ce psaume nous fournit un réconfort face à l'injustice : l'Éternel juge avec droiture (v 9). Ce n'est pas un juge capricieux ou qui peut être acheté ; il prend en compte toutes les circonstances et les motivations de chacun. Il n'est pas non plus un chef inefficace : il fait reculer et disparaître les ennemis (v 4). Dans une situation d'oppression qui donne l'impression de ne jamais évoluer, quelle promesse : un Dieu qui fait en sorte que même le souvenir des ennemis soit perdu (v 7) !

Même dans l'attente, le réconfort que fournit ce psaume est merveilleux : Dieu est une forteresse (v 10) qui n'abandonne pas ceux qui le cherchent (v 11).

La justice de Dieu se voit de façon suprême à la croix, où le Fils subit la punition pour les injustices du monde entier, de la plus petite à la plus grave. Dieu ne s'est pas montré indifférent ou impuissant face au mal.

Sarah Richelle

¹⁵ If you are reading this in English, the verse numbers are always one less than in French versions, so v 9 in French = v 8 in English.

Wednesday 15 March

Psalm 38 | Jeremiah 13.1–11 | Hebrews 6.13–20 | John 8.12–30

Psaumes 38 | Jérémie 13.1–11 | Hébreux 6.13–20 | Jean 8.12–30

Lumière divine dans les ténèbres

Le psaume 38 peut être compris comme une prière qui demande l'intervention de Dieu dans une situation désespérée. En effet, le roi David avait besoin que l'Éternel se manifeste dans un moment difficile à vivre. Ce psaume peut sembler bien loin de nous car écrit il y a si longtemps, mais il reste d'actualité dans nos vies de tous les jours. En effet, nous sommes constamment guettés par le péché, par des doutes, des douleurs, des situations qui dépassent l'entendement de l'homme. Le jour où on m'a soumis les textes susmentionnés pour écrire cette médiation, la Turquie et la Syrie ont été victimes d'un séisme sans précédent. Le même jour, en Belgique, un homme s'est suicidé après avoir assassiné son ex-femme et ses 2 enfants. En France, une maman est morte dans un incendie avec ses 7 enfants. Il y a eu aussi les grèves en Belgique et au Royaume Uni, la guerre en Ukraine... la liste de toutes les situations difficiles, voire catastrophiques, n'est malheureusement être exhaustive. Elle nous présente un tableau complètement noir !

Heureusement l'Évangile de Jean annonce un espoir pour notre monde de ténèbres ! En Jean 8.12 Jésus déclare en public : « Moi, je suis la lumière du monde... » Une lumière pour tous, une lumière qui apporte la vie.

Ces paroles de l'Évangile sont en contraste avec celles de notre psaume et ça nous fait du bien de les lire dans les moments de turbulence et d'agitation actuels. Quand des situations nous dépassent, Jésus est là pour nous rassurer et nous apaiser. Puisque nous ne pouvons pas contrôler ni arrêter tous les soucis du monde, qui donc allons-nous consulter, en qui allons-nous nous confier pour avoir la paix intérieure ? Notre Seigneur nous donne les pistes ! C'est-à-dire des recommandations pour le suivre jusqu'à la croix ! Si nous nous appuyons sur sa parole nous vivrons mieux les choses difficiles, même si elles nous font peur.

Comme David demandons-lui de ne pas nous laisser seuls dans la détresse, de se tenir tout près de nous et de venir en hâte à notre secours, puisqu'il est notre Seigneur et notre Sauveur !

À ceux qui croient en lui, Jésus annonce une pleine délivrance ! Jésus est notre victoire ! Amen.

Marie-Léonille Batiga

Thursday 16 March

Psalm 56 | Jeremiah 14 | Hebrews 7.1–10 | John 8.31–47

Psaumes 56 | Jérémie 14 | Hébreux 7.1–10 | Jean 8.31–47

God is with us

Psalm 56 is a lament, a cry for help from David, who was seized by the Philistines in Gath. David is known for being a successful young captain in Israel's army and famously killed Goliath, so we expect him to be the portrait of confidence and bravery. We expect him to help others, not to be the one needing help. However, in this Psalm, David tells us a different story. His words are fearful and desperate, and we see him no longer as a hero but as a human being that cries for help. In this stressful situation, David does not turn against God wondering why this has happened to him, as we might at times be tempted to do when life proves particularly challenging. Instead, he uses this opportunity, this moment of weakness, to boldly proclaim his trust in God over and over through the Psalm. "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you". This Easter, we should bring this verse with us as we deal with ordinary and extraordinary situations of distress. Our trust should be based on the knowledge that God is intimately involved in all our trials and tribulations – He is rooting for us; He is for us as He was for David ("By this I will know that God is for me"). We can take comfort in the knowledge that God sees us and is with us. Finally, this Psalm also reminds us that even the strongest person can experience fear, so we should be kind to one another, always.

Anna De Marchi



Friday 17 March, Patrick, bishop, missionary, patron of Ireland, c. 460 (Lesser Festival)

Psalm 22 | Jeremiah 15.10–21 | Hebrews 7.11–28 | John 8.48–59

Psaumes 22 | Jérémie 15.10–21 | Hébreux 7.11–28 | Jean 8.48–59

Blessed are the meek

I have never been to Ireland, so what comes up in my mind when I hear of this country are only the clichés: a green and rainy island, hard-working down-to-earth people with a melodic accent, fantastic fiddle tunes and Guinness. And of course also the 17th of March, Saint Patrick's Day, which in my mind is very much associated to having even more Guinness than usual. One of many festivities around the world which bears the name of a saint but has more evolved into something national and commercial or just an excuse to forget your everyday life and celebrate with friends and family. But even so: on their national day, Irish do raise their glasses in the honour of the man who brought them Christianity while other nations tend more to commemorate something political like the end of a crucial war, a victory over a neighbouring country, an independence act, a unification of the nation etc.

So who was this St Patrick? Well, first of all he was not born in Ireland but somewhere in Britain in the fifth century. He had a Christian Romano-Celtic background, but it wasn't until he was taken captive by pirates and was brought to Ireland where he was forced to work as a shepherd-slave, that his Christian faith become personal. Having escaped and returned miraculously to Britain he became a priest and a bishop and then returned as a missionary to Ireland to introduce Christianity to the pagan Irish. A project which met a lot of opposition, also from other Christians. He was even accused of financial dishonesty, like charging the performing of baptisms. What we know of him today is actually largely based upon his Declaration¹⁶ in which he defended himself against these charges. At the same time he gained a lot of followers: many Irish were converted and baptized and started to follow Christ. And eventually ended up forging their national identity around him.

I've always been fascinated by these early Christian pioneers. What was it like to spread the gospel in pre-Christian remote parts of Europe? I guess the Bible readings of today, where both Jeremiah and David cry out their suffering, give a hint of it. Here are some quotations: "Rescue me from the mouth of the lions: save me from the horns of the wild oxen." (Ps 22.21) and "Alas, my mother, that you gave me birth, a man with whom the whole land strives and contends!" (Jer 15.10).

Please Lord, make us meek in the face of opposition and help us understand this is nothing abnormal. Help us accept, forgive and go on spreading the light of your Gospel in whichever way or place you have called us to. In Jesus precious name, Amen.

Sara Gabriëlsson

Almighty God, who in your providence chose your servant Patrick to be the apostle of the Irish people: keep alive in us the fire of the faith he kindled and strengthen us in our pilgrimage towards the light of everlasting life; 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.

¹⁶ https://www.confessio.ie/etexts/confessio_english#

Saturday 18 March

Psalm 31 | Jeremiah 16.10—17.4 | Hebrews 8 | John 9.1—17

Psaumes 31 | Jérémie 16.10—17.4 | Hébreux 8 | Jean 9.1—17

Priez dans toutes les situations ~ Pray in all situations

À l'heure actuelle, la plupart des gens dans ce monde traversent des moments extrêmement difficiles où ils s'interrogent sur le pourquoi de leur souffrance.

En effet, hommes et femmes, enfants et vieillards, riches et pauvres, croyants et non croyants, malades et bien portants dans plusieurs régions du monde succombent suite à des guerres et des catastrophes naturelles. Par ailleurs, terrorisme, crises économique, politique, sociale, migratoire, épidémies troublent la conscience des gens et déciment des centaines et des centaines de gens à telle enseigne que ces derniers se retrouvent désemparés et pensent que malgré une méfiance grandissante vis-à-vis des églises, la seule solution qui reste est celle de faire confiance en Dieu.

Dans le même ordre d'idées, et en lisant Psaumes 31, l'on se rend compte que c'est au cours des épreuves que nous devrions grandir et devenir des hommes et des femmes spirituellement murs, des hommes et des femmes qui vivent toujours plus par la foi. Dans ce texte, nous pouvons apprécier la persévérance dans la prière du peuple d'Israël et ne pas nous limiter dans nos demandes au Seigneur en pensant qu'il sera ennuyé de réentendre les mêmes requêtes ; loin de là, car si cette pensée est parfois dans notre esprit, elle n'est jamais en Dieu.

C'est dans cet esprit que nous avons des exemples similaires dans notre monde contemporain notamment les personnes en extrême souffrance en République Démocratique du Congo, en Ukraine et en Turquie où les populations désespèrent point mais persévèrent dans la prière car elles savent que le Seigneur les libérera ; que leurs ennemis feront face à Dieu et qu'il y a des bénédictions que Dieu réserve à tous ceux qui se confient en lui.

Cela étant, gardant à l'esprit la façon dont a souffert Jésus Christ sur la croix pour nous, nous devrions apprendre que nos épreuves présentes ne sont pas le dernier mot de Dieu dans notre vie, que nous devrions prier dans toutes les situations et en nous rappelant que le Seigneur changera nos deuils en allégresse, nos souffrances en gloire et notre humiliation en élévation.

At present, most people in this world are going through extremely difficult times where they wonder about the reason for their suffering.

Indeed, men and women, children and the elderly, rich and poor, believers and non-believers, sick and healthy in several countries succumb to wars and natural disasters. In addition, terrorism, economic, political, social and migratory crises, epidemics disturb people's conscience and decimate hundreds of people to such an extent that they find themselves distraught and think that despite a growing mistrust vis-à-vis churches, the only solution left is to trust in God.

In the same way, and reading Psalms 31, one realizes that it is through trials that we should grow into spiritually mature men and women who live forever more by faith. In Psalms 31, we can appreciate the perseverance in prayer of the people of Israel and not limit ourselves in our requests to the Lord thinking that he will be bored to hear the same requests again; far from it, because if this thought is sometimes in our spirit, it is never in God.

Nowadays, we have similar examples in particular people in extreme suffering in Democratic Republic of Congo, in Ukraine and in Turkey where people do not despair but persevere in prayer because they know that the Lord will set them free; that their enemies will face God and that there are blessings that God has for all who trust in him.

That said, keeping in mind the way Jesus Christ suffered on the cross for us, we should learn that our present trials are not the last word of God in our life, that we should pray in all situations and remembering that the Lord will change our mourning into joy, our suffering into glory and our humiliation in elevation.

François Ndayishimiye

Sunday 19 March, Mothering Sunday (Festival)

Psalm 34.11-20 | 1 Samuel 1.20-28 | 2 Corinthians 1.3-7 | Luke 2.33-35

Psaumes 34.12-21 | 1 Samuel 1.20-28 | 2 Corinthiens 1.3-7 | Luc 2.33-35

Let Go and let God

What wonderful advice in our Mothering Sunday Psalm ! My Mum, like many others, was always far too busy with cooking and housework to spend long hours sitting down and putting the world to rights, though the kitchen was always full of chatter. But that's what Grannies are for - not forgetting Grampas, and especially all those wonderful Aunties (real and adopted). Even an Uncle or two !

“Come, my young friends”, says the Psalmist, starting off with that enticing picture of ‘long life and happiness’. He does take the time to tell us what it’s all about. Then comes the tricky bit : HOW ?

- No harsh words or lies ; no imitating of bad behaviour. Easy! Just turn away from all that nastiness one finds in the irritations of everyday life, and instead look towards taking positive actions for good; work with all your might and main for peaceful outcomes in every frustrating situation. That simple! Maybe showing some respect to God means listening harder to what he’s saying?

Then the advice gets down to business: the Lord really listens to those in need of help, and will support anyone who has become discouraged. He is the one who will come to our rescue too, when we are in real trouble: though He’d quite like us to remember to ask him for help when we need it . . . Just like we used to ask our Mums . . .

SO: - Let Go and let God His idea . . .

Pam Clements



Monday 20 March, Joseph of Nazareth (Festival)

Psalm 89.26-36 | 2 Samuel 7.4–16 | Romans 4.13–18 | **Matthew 1.18–25**

Psaumes 89.27-37 | 2 Samuel 7.4–16 | Romains 4.13–18 | Matthieu 1.18–25

Quiet faithfulness

Today we remember and celebrate Joseph of Nazareth, a person who is both inspiring and enigmatic. Joseph is inspiring because, as our gospel reading today demonstrates, he was a person of great faith. He trusted in the prophecy of the Angel, followed God's instructions, was a faithful companion to Mary and a devoted earthly and adopted father to Jesus. Joseph is enigmatic because, despite his immense importance (helping raise the Son of God is no insignificant task!), we never hear Joseph speak in Scripture. We are told about his intentions and actions, but his voice never breaks through the page. Perhaps God is teaching us something through this curious omission.

We do not know the extent of the role that Joseph played in Jesus' life, especially because the Gospel texts fast forward to Jesus' last years, skipping over those moments in which Joseph's presence would have stood out. But I am more fascinated by the few lines we are given about Joseph than the details we don't know. Before Joseph is visited by the angel Gabriel, our reading mentions Joseph's intention to "quietly" divorce Mary to spare her shame, an action that he fortunately did not go through with. But this intention to act quietly, and his lack of recorded speech, present Joseph as someone with quiet faithfulness. We do not know the extent of his contribution to Jesus' life, but that's because Joseph was not the type to parade his virtues. Joseph has some silent wisdom to teach us: God works wonders through the quiet, often overlooked faithfulness of God's servants. These lives and deeds may be overlooked by the world, but they are cherished by God, and are nothing less than signs of God's miraculous activity.

Jacob Quick

God our Father,
who from the family of your servant David
raised up Joseph the carpenter
to be the guardian of your incarnate Son
and husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary:
give us grace to follow him
in faithful obedience to your commands;
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

Tuesday 21 March, Thomas Cranmer, archbishop, martyr, 1556 (Lesser Festival)

Psalm 79 | Jeremiah 18.1–12 | Hebrews 9.15–28 | John 10.1–10

Psaumes 79 | Jérémie 18.1–12 | Hébreux 9.15–28 | Jean 10.1–10

Cranmer – the inspiring compromiser

⁸ O remember not our old sins, but have mercy upon us, and that soon : for we are come to great misery.

⁹ Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy Name : O deliver us, and be merciful unto our sins, for thy Name's sake¹⁷.

Since early childhood I've been drawn to accounts of martyrs, from the early Church to the witnesses of the present day, and all my life I've asked myself what I would do in their place. But I know all too well - I'd make every compromise and every denial required of me, and I'd justify myself perfectly for doing so. I compromise my faith and love of God in small ways every day; some unbelieving friends still don't know after nearly five years that I try to follow Christ. So I'm drawn to the compromiser Cranmer, who perhaps compromised because he believed that the state should rule the church in ecclesiastical matters, but probably also just because he was always afraid. So I understand his hesitations and recantations far better than the unwavering heroism of Ridley, Latimer, Hooper or others who also faced a dreadful death by fire. And I'm grateful to him for glorious words with which to pray, the beautiful and inspiring liturgy of Evensong, and some examples of kindness and humility I could never match. Even if it's only at the last moments of my life, and whatever form my death takes, may I be able to pray the words of Psalm 79 which I've quoted, and at last be true to God and to myself as Cranmer was. And may God deliver and be merciful to me and to us all, despite our weaknesses, for the sake of his Name and the Name of Jesus.

Sara Lewis

Father of all mercies,
who through the work of your servant Thomas Cranmer
renewed the worship of your Church
and through his death revealed your strength in human weakness:
by your grace strengthen us to worship you
in spirit and in truth
and so to come to the joys of your everlasting kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Mediator and Advocate,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

¹⁷ <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/psalter/psalms-79-81>.
Coverdale-BCP translation, which Cranmer would have known.

Wednesday 22 March

Psalm 90 | Jeremiah 18.13–23 | Hebrews 10.1-18 | John 10.11-21

Psaumes 90 | Jérémie 18.13–23 | Hébreux 10.1-18 | Jean 10.11-21

Jésus le bon berger



Ce passage nous rappelle l'amour infini et inconditionnel de notre Dieu le père qui a consacré la vie de son fils Jésus Christ et Jésus le fils qui n'a pas refusé la mission du père, en donnant sa vie jusqu'à mourir sur la croix pour nous sauver et nous libérer du péché. Il n'a pas fui devant la mort comme l'aurait fait un mercenaire mais il a été fidèle jusqu'au bout. Il est celui qui nous rassemble et qui veille sur nous (son troupeau) jour et nuit et qui ne veut qu'aucun de nous ne soit égaré ou perdu mais que nous ayons tous la vie éternelle. Il est notre guide et connaît chacun d'entre nous, nos besoins, nos joies et nos peines.

Méditation : Qu'en est-il de moi ? Connais-je vraiment mon berger comme il le dit ? Quelle relation ai-je avec lui jusqu' à me laisser guider en toute confiance et sans crainte dans les montagnes comme dans les valets ? Vais-je là où il me conduit chaque fois sans hésitation ? Quelle relation ou comportement ai-je avec lui au quotidien peu importe les saisons de sécheresse, de neige ou de pluie abondante ? Quel berger suis-je à mon tour, dans ma maison, ma famille, mon entourage, au travail, à l'église ou ailleurs ?

Prière : Berger fidèle, toi qui as consacré ta vie par amour pour nous, aide-nous-en cette période de carême à faire notre introspection afin de renouveler notre relation intime avec toi au travers la prière et la lecture de ta parole. Permits -nous de te découvrir davantage, à rester te fidèle et uni en toi. Aide-nous à être des bons bergers qui prennent soins des autres et qui aiment sans condition, sans rien attendre de retour pour la gloire de ton nom, Amen.

Grâce Ntunzwenimana

Thursday 23 March

Psalms 86 | Jeremiah 19.1–13 | Hebrews 10.19–25 | John 10.22–42

Psaumes 86 | Jérémie 19.1–13 | **Hébreux 10.19–25** | Jean 10.22–42

Appel à la persévérance

J'ai entendu un prédicateur qui disait, certaines personnes prient en disant : « Seigneur, me voici dans ta présence. » Alors, il disait, où étiez-vous avant ?

En effet, nous avons maintenant accès à Dieu 24h/24 et 7j/7 et nous vivons constamment dans sa présence. Le chapitre 10 de la lettre aux Hébreux est une couverture d'assurance pour nous chrétiens. J'aime beaucoup ce verset qui dit :

¹⁷ Et je ne me souviendrai plus de leurs péchés ni de leurs iniquités.¹⁸

Maintenant que vous êtes pleinement assuré d'avoir été parfaitement purifié du péché, approchez-vous de Dieu avec la pleine assurance de la foi !

L'ancienne alliance de la loi dépend de l'obéissance de l'homme, alors que la nouvelle alliance de la grâce dépend de la fidélité et de la capacité de Dieu. Dieu vous bénira sûrement !

Dieu ne traite pas avec nous en fonction des péchés, mais en fonction de son Fils.

De même que Jésus mérite toutes les bénédictions, nous aussi, car nous sommes en lui !

Selon Antoine Nouis, notre présentation devant Dieu est un chemin nouveau et vivant. Nous sommes appelés à un chemin de nouveauté et de vie par celui qui est **le chemin, la vérité et la vie** (Jn 14.6). La purification ne vient plus des rites religieux, mais de la foi dans l'œuvre du Christ et de la sincérité de notre cœur.

²⁴ Veillons les uns sur les autres, pour nous exciter à la charité et aux bonnes œuvres.

²⁵ N'abandonnons pas notre assemblée, comme c'est la coutume de quelques-uns; mais exhortons-nous réciproquement, et cela d'autant plus que vous voyez s'approcher le jour.

Comment inciter l'autre à l'amour et aux bonnes œuvres ? En les vivant.

La fréquentation d'une église locale est en déclin dans les pays occidentaux, aux Etats-Unis par exemple, selon American Family Survey (2019-2021), la baisse est d'environ 10 points de pourcentage entre 2019 et 2021 pour les moins de 35 ans ainsi que pour les 65 ans et plus, mais seulement de 4 points de pourcentage pour le groupe d'âge moyen¹⁹. L'auteur de la lettre aux Hébreux nous encourage à persévérer dans la fréquentation de notre communauté de foi car la foi n'est pas que personnelle, elle est aussi collective.

Eric Sibomana

¹⁸ Louis Segond. Public Domain.

¹⁹ See, for example, <https://ifstudies.org/blog/the-decline-in-church-attendance-in-covid-america>

Friday 24 March

Psalm 102 | Jeremiah 19.14—20.6 | Galatians 4.1–5 | John 11.1-16

Psaumes 102 | Jérémie 19.14—20.6 | Galates 4.1–5 | Jean 11.1-16'

God endures for ever

There's a lot in Psalm 102.

A sparrow on the house top. An owl alone in the desert. Alone and utterly bereft, with no home or community.



The writer is angry at God, and at the same time is searching for God. There seems to be anger without self-awareness, which comes from not knowing God. God doesn't punish those keeping his commandments. God isn't testing us or the writer, but He is freeing the writer from the current difficult situation. God endures forever.

Today in Antwerp I saw Bruegel's tower of Babylon - dark, bleak, empty. Like Jeremiah's prophecy: “And you, Pashhur, and all who live in your house, shall go into captivity, and to Babylon you shall go; there you shall die, and there you shall be buried, you and all your friends, to whom you have prophesied falsely²⁰”. Anger without self-awareness - Jeremiah is prophesying against such behaviour. The absence of knowing and obeying God.

What can we learn here? The theme throughout the readings today seems to be: God endures forever. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, the disciples follow Jesus, and Paul seems to advise us to wait for God. So let's not be a sparrow on the roof (although I guess in German it's a sparrow in the hand is better than 2 pigeons on the roof) or an owl alone in the desert. Don't be so self-unaware that we isolate ourselves. God endures forever.

Leigh Outten

²⁰ New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicised Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Saturday 25 March, Annunciation of Our Lord to the Virgin Mary (Principal Feast)

Psalm 40.5–11 | Isaiah 7.10–14 | Hebrews 10.4–10 | **Luke 1.26–38**

Psaumes 40.6–12 | Ésaïe 7.10–14 | Hébreux 10.4–10 | Luc 1.26–38

Amen

Commenting on Botticelli's depiction of the Annunciation, Dr Debbie Lewer says, "There is a lectern before her with a book of devotions. It tells us something about Mary's own life of faith. But it also reminds us that what is happening here has to do with the word. The word made flesh... This painting, like all Annunciations, speaks of incarnation, of God with us. For me today, it also speaks of how what matters most, what is most central, is not the barrier, but what is open, what is light, what is real, what is holy, what is mutual, what is accepting, and what is humble." Equally striking is Mary's fiat, her open 'Amen' given in faith and freedom to God's powerful Word communicated by the angel (Luke 1.38).



What unlikely message from God is inviting our 'Amen' today?

Let us pray for grace to offer our 'Amen': "We beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy grace into our hearts; that, as we have known the incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his cross and passion we may be brought unto the glory of his resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

To listen to the rest of her commentary, listen to 'In a time of many isolations', in which Debbie Lewer looks at Botticelli's painting in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: <https://thecathedral.org.uk/2020/12/06/podcast-for-the-annunciation/>.

Annie Bolger

Sunday 26 March Fifth Sunday of Lent (*Passiontide begins*)

Psalm 130 | Ezekiel 37.1–14 | Romans 8.6–11 | **John 11.1–45**

Psaumes 130 | Ézéchiel 37.1–14 | Romains 8.6–11 | Jean 11.1–45

He is risen

In the antechapel of New College Oxford is a striking sculpture of Lazarus by Jacob Epstein, when Jesus calls him out of the grave. It is one of my most vivid images from all my time there; for me it expressed both hope and doubt.



Interior of New College Chapel: View of the 1969 Grant, Degens & Bradbeer organ and Jacob Epstein's statue of Lazarus²¹.

When Jesus arrives at the home of Lazarus, he has been dead for four days, but he orders that the stone be removed from the tomb and calls his dead friend by name. And Lazarus comes out, still wound in his grave clothes, a shroud covering his face. “Unbind him,” Jesus says, “And let him go.”

If you look at the back of the statue, you can see the stark reality of this moment, a body swaddled in grave clothes. But if you look at the front, you see the head turned at a sharp, unnatural angle, as if Lazarus has heard his name and hasn't yet opened his eyes. The image suggests that he is painfully and doubtfully trying to turn from death to life. Just as in life, which way are we called to turn in resurrection? Is the pull greater towards death or towards some new reality? For each of us, that pull will ebb and flow with the tide of life, and it is important that we are reminded of it anew each Easter: “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, he is risen”; and the promise of “Today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Nicholas Deliyankis

²¹ You might find clearer pictures of the statue on the internet.

Monday 27 March

Psalm 73 | Jeremiah 21.1–10 | Hebrews 11.17–31 | John 11.28–44

Psaumes 73 | Jérémie 21.1–10 | Hébreux 11.17–31 | Jean 11.28–44

A reflective Lent

Have you ever had Lent envy? Like that time when your friend Bob gave up both meat and wine, and then not only got more holy but also lost a stone? Or when Janine gave up Facebook for the entire time and used the newly spare time to read the whole Bible (KJV and NIV), while you would not even dream of it, because, well, where would you read the news from all your favourite outlets in one convenient place?

I have. I have never even tried to ‘do Lent’ (OK, once I came close to considering it, but convinced myself that dry Veganuary²² is just as good, and, well, shorter...). I thought that perhaps those who do must be really devout and have years of practice, so it’s easier for them anyway. They’re like the wicked in Psalm 73:4-5:

⁴They have no struggles;
their bodies are healthy and strong.

⁵They are free from common human burdens;
they are not plagued by human ills.

Then recently I have come across a song that drove me nuts for days. Its chorus booms ‘dream small, don’t buy the lie you’ve got to do it all’, and it sticks into your mind like a tune from a good old Gillette commercial. Dream small? ‘Dream’ – ‘small’? What do you mean ‘dream small’? You dream small – you achieve little, right? OK, I am no Herod with his scale of infrastructure projects, but dreaming small makes no sense!

Maybe you’re a bit more advanced than I am and twigged fully that lent is not about mindfulness, it’s not a cleanse, nor a 40-day fitness challenge. Maybe you’ve gone big this year and given up something that has been standing between you and Christ in your daily routine. That’s great!

For me, I think won’t be giving up anything but my ambition and focus on what it turns out Lent is about: reflecting on death, mortality and suffering. And for that I will need a glass of wine.

Emilija Timmis

²² <https://veganuary.com/>

Tuesday 28 March

Psalm 35 | Jeremiah 22.1–5, 13–19 | Hebrews 11.32–12.2 | John 11.45–57

Psaumes 35 | Jérémie 22.1–5, 13–19 | Hébreux 11.32–12.2 | Jean 11.45–57

To be hated without cause

Have you ever had to deal with someone whom you felt was causing you unnecessary hurt or stress; a family member, neighbour, the bureaucrat at the commune, an internet provider, or that work colleague/boss hindering your career?

At times you must have felt they were your enemy, who were out to get you. But let's be honest, most of us are not dealing with dangerous individuals. People who are antagonistic are thankfully not the same as being under attack by enemies, such as those King David, author of this Psalm, faced.

Psalm 35 is written as a lament, in which David calls on the Lord to fight against his enemies, destroying those who unjustly hate him. This faithful servant had enemies rise up against him conspiring, mocking and reviling him, when he did not deserve it. As verse 19 says “Do not let those gloat over me who are my enemies without cause; do not let those who hate me without reason maliciously wink the eye.”

He was like another faithful servant who was hated without cause; Jesus.

We see this throughout the Gospels and Jesus also tells us this. In the Gospel of John, Chapter 15.25 he even quotes Psalm 35; “But this is to fulfil what is written in their law: “They hated me without reason.””

In John chapter 15 Jesus also warns the disciples that they too will face similar hatred.

Thankfully most of us as Christians don't face similar persecution or hatred in Belgium or Western Europe, but as individuals we still face our own challenges to our faith.

What can we learn from David in Psalm 35 about his hope that God will vindicate his servant, and how does his faith help him endure his most difficult challenges?

Rajnish Singh

Wednesday 29 March

Psalm 55 | Jeremiah 22.20—23.8 | Hebrews 12.3-13 | John 12.1-11

Psaumes 55 | Jérémie 22.20—23.8 | Hébreux 12.3-13 | Jean 12.1-11

Cast your burdens upon the Lord ~ Remets ton sort à l'Éternel

Life is made of battles that we face daily they might be physical, or moral may be financial, sicknesses, divorces, hatred, domestic violence, harassments and many more that people face here and there. There are also Spiritual battles that we don't see physically as it says in Ephesians 6.12 that we don't battle against flesh and blood but against powers, rulers of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places. Alone we can't face them but only by the help of the Holy spirit.

Let's cast our burdens unto the Lord by praying unceasingly, like David in this psalm 55 let us choose to call upon the Lord evening, morning and noon, The Lord shall hear our voices and he alone can save us from those battles, he'll sustain us and will never allow the righteous to be shaken.

We're Gods sons and daughters covered by the blood of Jesus; the arrows of the enemy that attacks us shall be broken in Jesus' name.

Let us put our trust in the Lord as he sends the Holy spirit as our helper to accompany us in our Daily Life. Amen

Quotidiennement, nous faisons face à des combats à gauche à droite que ce soit des combats physiques lié à des problèmes de la vie comme par exemples les problèmes de santé, financières, les divorces, la haine, violence domestique ou autres mais aussi les combats spirituels comme c'est écrit dans Ephésiens 6.12. Seule le saint Esprit peut combattre pour nous car seules nous ne pouvons pas.

Remettons notre sort à l'éternel, prions sans cesse comme David dans ce psaume 55 à choisi de prier matin, midi et soir et le Seigneur Dieu entendra notre voix et nous sauvera de ses combats, l'éternel ne laissera jamais chanceler le juste.

Nous sommes les enfants de Dieu couverts par le sang de Jésus, les flèches de l'ennemie qui nous attaquent seront brisées au nom de Jésus.

Gardons notre espérance en l'éternel car il nous envoie son Esprits Saint pour nous aider et nous accompagner dans la vie de tous les jours. Amen

Priscille Uwase

Thursday 30 March

Psalm 40 | Jeremiah 23.9–32 | Hebrews 12.14-29 | John 12.12-19

Psaumes 40 | Jérémie 23.9–32 | Hébreux 12.14-29 | Jean 12.12-19

Scary book

A couple of weeks ago I received a long e-mail from my sister Judy entitled “Scary Book”. The book she was referring to was “The Real Anthony Fauci²³”, by Robert Kennedy Jr.²⁴, which, as she explains in summarising it, is a “strident and polemical” work “laying out a case of corruption so awful, so big and so long-term that it defies description” (her words), so extreme as to upset her to the point at which she wanted to give up reading it, and penned the e-mail in question to me and several other friends, asking or suggesting that we read it and give her our opinions, presumably in the hope we could offer her some comfort.

Now, works such as these are often described as “Jeremiads”, taking this name from the book which we are currently reading, the book of the prophet Jeremiah, who similarly speaks at considerable length about how evil seems to be taking over the world. Today’s passage is pretty typical, and like much of the book it alternates despairing descriptions of what the Godless and adulterous population are getting up to with prophecies of the punishment God is going to mete out to them. Scary stuff.

I mention my sister’s reaction to Kennedy’s book because, although I love her and am sympathetic to her distress, feel there is little comfort I can offer her as she is a totally committed atheist, believes that this world is all there is and that humanity should be perfect (and might be perfectible) within it, unsurprisingly she is disappointed. I read Jeremiah and realise that mankind hasn’t changed much in 2,700 years, but can fall back on my faith and the certainty, expressed by the psalmist throughout psalm 40 that God will be my help and deliverer. Having argued the matter with her over most of our lifetimes (60+ years!) I know this reaction won’t cut much ice with her, so I pray that through my life and example she may eventually “see and fear, and put her trust in the Lord”

I probably won’t be reading Kennedy’s book.

Carol de Lusignan

²³ <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/The-Real-Anthony-Fauci/Robert-F-Kennedy-Jr/Children-s-Health-Defense/9781510766808>

²⁴ “Robert Francis Kennedy Jr. (born January 17, 1954) is an American environmental lawyer and author known for promoting anti-vaccine propaganda and conspiracy theories.” (from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_F._Kennedy_Jr.)

Friday 31 March

Psalm 22 | Jeremiah 24 | **Hebrews 13.1–16** | John 12.20–36a

Psaumes 22 | Jérémie 24 | Hébreux 13.1–16 | Jean 12.20–36a

Practical Christian living

In this passage, the author addresses the importance of maintaining love, hospitality, and financial generosity, warning against the dangers of false teachings, and reminding the readers of the eternal nature of their salvation through Jesus Christ.

The author begins by instructing the readers to maintain love for one another and to be hospitable to outsiders. This is considered a key part of living a life that honours God, and the author also encourages the readers to remember those who are in prison or have suffered for their faith, as this is a way of identifying with the persecuted and suffering members of the community.

The author then warns against the dangers of false teachings, reminding the readers to cling to the truth they have been taught and to remain steadfast in their faith. Jesus Christ is presented as the same yesterday, today, and forever, and his sacrifice on the cross is sufficient to provide salvation and eternal life to all who believe in him.

The author also encourages the readers to be content with what they have and to avoid the love of money, which is the root of all evil. The author reminds them of the transitory nature of earthly things and that their true home is in heaven, where they will enjoy eternal blessings.

The author then highlights the importance of following the example of leaders who have gone before them and to imitate their faith and obedience to God. The readers are also encouraged to offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God, as this is considered a key part of living a life that is pleasing to him.

Finally, the author offers a prayer for the readers, asking God to grant them peace and grace, and to provide for all their needs. The author also reminds them to follow the teachings of their leaders, who have spoken the word of God to them, and to consider the outcome of their faith, which is eternal life.

In conclusion, Hebrews 13:1-16 is a rich and powerful passage that provides practical guidance for living a faithful life as a Christian. The author encourages the readers to maintain their love for one another, to be hospitable to outsiders, to avoid false teachings, to be content with what they have, to follow the example of their leaders, and to offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Through these actions, the readers are reminded of the eternal nature of their salvation through Jesus Christ and the importance of living a life that honours and pleases God.

Sam David

Saturday 1 April

Psalm 23 | Jeremiah 25.1–14 | Hebrews 13.17–25 | John 12.36b–50

Psaumes 23 | Jérémie 25.1–14 | Hébreux 13.17–25 | Jean 12.36b–50

The good shepherd

Psalm 23 is a favourite for many. It probably gets as much attention as the rest of the psalms put together! Perhaps it is so well known it takes some effort to hear it with fresh ears.

Imagine that you are in the wilderness. The desert is a dangerous place. Green pastures and still waters are rare, and you need someone who knows the way to find them. If you do not find them you will not survive long.

Hidden dangers may lurk around you, to say nothing of the enemies who are deliberating menacing you. You may come to grief through accident or by malice.

Perhaps this psalm is so popular because we have all been in the places of danger in one way or another. We have all felt hungry or thirsty and needed the good green grass, or the cool, fresh water. Like the prodigal son at his lowest we can only conceive of perhaps finding the minimum we need to survive.

But like the prodigal son, we are met not with a grudging donation but with overwhelming generosity. A cup that fills and fills and even overflows. Even with enemies close by we are anointed and welcomed and celebrated. And the Good Shepherd says, “Rejoice with me, for I have found the sheep that is lost!”

I wonder where you have found green pastures and still waters?

I wonder if you have ever been in the places of danger?

I wonder if you have feasted at the table of the Good Shepherd?

Philip Milton

Sunday 2 April, Palm Sunday (*Liturgy of the Passion*)

Psalm 31.9-16 | Isaiah 50.4-9a | Philippians 2.5-11 | Matthew 26.14-27.66

Psaumes 31.10-17 | Ésaïe 50.4-9a | **Philippiens 2.5-11** | Matthieu 26.14-27.66

Le modèle par excellence

Nous avons certainement tous grandi avec des modèles. Certains de ces modèles étaient des personnes de notre entourage. D'autres, quant à eux, étaient des personnes célèbres (chanteurs, acteurs, comédiens,...)

Lorsque nous prenons une personne pour modèle, cela signifie qu'elle nous inspire, qu'il y a quelque chose en elle qui nous pousse à l'admirer. En grandissant, j'ai compris qu'en fait, nous sommes tous humains donc, faillibles.

Nous sommes donc tous capables de blesser, d'attrister ou de décevoir.

Je suis persuadée qu'avant même de savoir que Jésus était Dieu fait chair, beaucoup prenait le Christ comme modèle. La Bible dit de Jésus qu'il n'avait ni éclat ni beauté pour attirer les regards et son aspect n'avait rien pour plaire. Pourtant, ce qu'il dégageait suffisait pour que les gens comprennent qu'il était différent.

Avec notre expérience de vie, nous avons tous été déçus par certaines personnes. Nous finissons par réaliser que ces gens que nous prenions comme exemple, à qui nous voulions ressembler, sont en fait comme nous. Des personnes avec des qualités et des défauts. Toutefois, il n'y a que Jésus qui est digne d'être le véritable modèle. Lui qui était Dieu fait chair, il s'est humilié, s'est dépouillé afin d'être semblable à un serviteur.

Parmi tous les modèles, les exemples que le monde voudrait nous présenter, recherchons le modèle par excellence: Christ. Lui seul possède les qualités et sentiments que auxquels nous devrions aspirer.

Tracy Sibomana

Monday 3 April, Monday of Holy Week

Psalm 41 | Lamentations 1.1-12a | Colossians 1.18-23 | **Luke 22.1-23**

Psaumes 41 | Lamentations 1.1-12a | Colossiens 1.18-23 | Luc 22.1-23

The evil within?



You know Easter is near, when the gospel reading reaches Judas' meeting with the religious authorities to discuss him betraying Jesus. As I was reading the text myself, something struck me. It was verse six: "He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present." Especially the 'when no crowd was present' made me realise, how thought-out this plan was. Judas wasn't acting on a whim. The inner voice telling him to do this, wasn't merely an intrusive thought, the enemy had properly entered him. As Judas met with the authorities, they planned out a surprisingly detailed, thought-out plan. 'Let's not take the risk of arresting Jesus in public,' they said. Jesus's glorious entry into Jerusalem is still fresh in their mind. How quickly the tides are going to change. Anyways, this same line was Judas's to-do list following the meeting. Whenever he saw a good opportunity, he should wave over his new cop-friends and have Jesus get arrested. As he rejoined Jesus and the other disciples, this is what was on his mind, 24/7. I wonder what went on in Judas's mind. Did he at one point second guess himself? He sure had the time to do so. Did he ever get cold feet? What did his conscience say to him during these days? Was he doubtful, or was he resolute, determined, fully convinced that betraying Jesus was the right thing to do? What does that say about us, about the nature of evil, or the possible evil that lives within us?

Teus Vermeer

Holy Trinity Pro-cathedral, Brussels, Lent Meditations 2023

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Tuesday 4 April, Tuesday of Holy Week

Psalm 27 | Lamentations 3.1-18 | Galatians 6.11-18 | Luke 22.24-53

Psaumes 27 | Lamentations 3.1-18 | Galates 6.11-18 | Luc 22.24-53

God's tent

The first three verses of this psalm sound to me like a mantra I may repeat in my head when the going gets tough:

The Lord is my light and salvation – whom then shall I fear?

But in reality I do get afraid and worried, and God isn't always the first resource I turn to for help. Of course, our family, friends, colleagues, self-help books and even internet sites are all valid places to seek reassurance and advice, and God can certainly be working through these ('God has no hands but our hands' to paraphrase a prayer attributed to St Teresa of Avila). But do I put enough trust in God to be the 'stronghold of my life'?

In my copy of the New English Bible (NEB), this psalm comes with the subheading 'the cure for anxiety'. Oh, if only it were so simple to read this psalm and to stop worrying

Reading to v 5 in the NEB, this imagery really grabbed me:

.. (s)he will hide me under the cover of her/ his tent, (s)he will raise me beyond reach of distress...

The people of God spent many generations travelling through and living in the desert. The desert is a dangerous place, where the sand stings and the sun burns your skin by day and at night you have to wrap up warm against the cold – people only go into the desert if they absolutely have to and some do not return.

How wonderful then to come across God's tent where you can find refuge from the hostile desert climate, rest a while under the protective blankets and on the soft cushions inside until the storm has passed or maybe just until you have gathered up enough strength to go and face the storm (of life) once more.



Philippa Hayward

Holy Trinity Pro-cathedral, Brussels, Lent Meditations 2023

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Wednesday 5 April, Wednesday of Holy Week

Psalm 102 | Jeremiah 11.18-20 | Revelation 14.18-15.4 | **Luke 22.54-71**

Psaumes 102 | Jérémie 11.18-20 | Apocalypse 14.18-15.4 | Luc 22.54-71

He went outside and wept bitterly

Have you ever had one of those heart stopping, gut wrenching, body squirming moments when you know you've made a complete mess of something? A soured relationship, a missed important deadline at school or work, discovery of an incorrect calculation on which bad decisions have been based, an ill-judged comment that could have been left unspoken but wasn't, a wrong step that results in a twisted ankle or worse.

It would be easy to quickly pass over Peter's failure here because we so often skip to the end of the story. We have a friend who likes to say, "hindsight is a very precise science". And usually that is the right way to read scripture. After all, the bible is not a murder mystery where we don't know who did it. We need to keep in mind the big picture.



We know that Peter is wonderfully restored by Jesus after He rose from the dead and appeared to the disciples by the Sea of Galilee. You can read the account in John 21.15-19. Mirroring the way Peter denied knowing Jesus three times, Jesus lovingly asks Peter three times if he loves Him and gives him a commission. We take comfort from that restoration and the knowledge of the forgiveness of his and our sins.

But in this Holy Week, it is fitting to stop and sit awhile with that sense of desolation in verse 62.

To feel the horror Peter felt when Jesus turned and looked at him.

To weep bitterly over the messes we make.

To try looking Jesus in the eye after we have let Him down; when we have cared more about what others think of us than about being known as a follower of Jesus.

And..... when we have done that Easter Sunday will make so much more sense and our celebration will be even more heartfelt.

Susie Wilkinson

Holy Trinity Pro-cathedral, Brussels, Lent Meditations 2023

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Thursday 6 April, Maundy Thursday (Principal Holy Day)

Psalm 42 | Leviticus 16.2-24 | Ephesians 2.11-18 | Luke 23.1-25

Psaumes 42 | Lévitique 16.2-24 | Éphésiens 2.11-18 | Luc 23.1-25

Our cancelled debt

On Maundy Thursday, the night of the Last Supper, we are hours away from the painful moments when Jesus carries his cross to Golgotha, ready to die for our sins “once and for all” (Heb. 7:27).

The significance of his death for us is brought before our eyes with the reading from early Old Testament (“OT”) times in Lev. 16, illustrating how sins were gotten rid of before Jesus. The priest (Aaron) took a goat, a scapegoat (from this we get the English word also). He had “to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat’s head. He [sent] the goat away into the wilderness...”²²



In most of the OT, sin is described as a weight that was loaded onto the back of the sinner and eventually would crush him. This is why on the Day of Atonement described here, once a year, the most serious of Israel's sins, those too grave to be removed by the regular provisions for ritual purification, were ceremonially loaded by the high priest onto the head of a goat. The animal then was led out into the wilderness, never to return.

For us, Jesus carried this burden, once and for all, making the annual scapegoat exercise unnecessary. How fitting that a day before the walk to Golgotha the lectionary reminds us of this old (painful) reality!

However, with Jesus, the idea of a sin as debt demanding payment became the dominant metaphor of sin, replacing the metaphor of a burden. A creditor can cancel a debt, turning the sum owed by his debtor into an unmerited gift. This is what Jesus did, and it is for this that he teaches his disciples to pray: “Forgive us our debts as we forgive those who hold debts against us.” We are called to forgive, as we have been forgiven!

Friday 7 April, Good Friday (Principal Holy Day)

Psalm 69 | Lamentations 5.15–22 | Hebrews 10.1–10 | John 19.38–42

Psaumes 69 | Lamentations 5.15–22 | Hébreux 10.1–10 | Jean 19.38–42

What sort of sacrifice?

Jesus' death on the cross was a sacrifice. As John the Baptist said, Jesus was the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world. Jesus' blood signalled the ultimate 'ex-odos,' 'the way out', the Exodus Jesus was about to accomplish in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). Through Jesus and the Spirit, God continues to liberate people who cannot save themselves, to bring them into a relationship that touches all areas of their lives. And God journeys with them till they reach their promised destination to be in his presence forever. Jesus' death on the cross is a once for all, all sufficient sacrifice, which is a majestic truth.

But there is more. The letter to the Hebrews says: *Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt-offerings and sin-offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, "See, God, I have come to do your will, O God" (in the scroll of the book it is written of me)* (Hebrews 10:5-7).

There is a sense that Jesus whole life was a pleasing sacrifice, not just his death. A life of perfect love, obedience and service. Jesus' death on the cross is the crowning moment of that living sacrifice once offered. And indeed, he loved us till the end. Forgiving, praying, caring.

We are invited to follow in his footsteps. We cannot die the death he died. That was a once for all, perfect sacrifice. Of that sacrifice we are mere bystanders who benefit from its outcome. But we are invited to live the life he lived.... living sacrifices. This includes dying to self and offering ourselves in love and service. No wonder this Son of David receives a funeral fit for a king (new grave, abundant spices). On the third day we will discover how pleasing a sacrifice this was, when Jesus will start on his way to be crowned Lord of All, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Thank you Lord Jesus for your perfect sacrifice which opened the gate of glory, the access to paradise, way to the Father.... Life abundant. Help us to follow in your footsteps.

Paul Vrolijk

Almighty Father,
look with mercy on this your family
for which our Lord Jesus Christ was content to be betrayed and given up into the hands of sinners
and to suffer death upon the cross;
who is alive and glorified with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Saturday 8 April, Easter Eve

Psalm 31.1-4,15-16 | **Job 14.1-14** | 1 Peter 4.1-8 | **Matthew 27.57-66**

Psaumes 31.2-5,16-17 | Job 14.1-14 | 1 Pierre 4.1-8 | Matthieu 27.57-66

Wait faithfully



The darkest of days. Jesus disciples have fled in fear and confusion, the humiliation and pain of yesterday's crucifixion etched forever in their brains. Everything is topsy turvy. A rich man receives the body of Jesus – champion of the poor! – for burial. The authorities are concerned enough about Jesus' terrified followers making false resurrection claims to secure the tomb with a seal and post guards to keep watch.

And sitting watching ... are two women. Powerless against the guards. Mourning. Watching.

- Are they hoping for a miracle? Do they know and mull over Job's words '*a man dies and is laid low; he breathes his last and is no more.... If someone dies, will they live again?*'
- Are they observing the scene on behalf of other followers, less likely to be arrested than the men?
- Are they simply there to be close to Jesus, even in death?

In places of darkness and pain, - whether literal places, or emotional - we often lack words, even prayers, and we may not know how to act, or what to expect, or where to look for hope. But our very act of being in those places, our presence in situations of hurt and fear, is unexpectedly powerful in itself. We don't have all the answers, but being prepared to sit in the darkness is part of our journey of discipleship. So let us follow the example of these two women, who bore witness to the desolation of Easter Saturday without knowing when or if the light would return. May they inspire us to be able to step into dark places, to wait faithfully, to give our presence when we have nothing else to give.

Mags Bird

Sunday 9 April, Easter Day (Principal Feast)

Psalm 118.1-2,14-24 | Jeremiah 31.1-6 | Acts 10.34-43 | John 20.1-18

Psaumes 118.2-3,15-25 | Jérémie 31.1-6 | Actes 10.34-43 | Jean 20.1-18

He is risen! ~ Il est ressuscité

“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.” (Psalms 118.1). On this Easter Day, let us give thanks to the Lord for we have every reason to be thankful; He has risen, and all has been accomplished at the cross.

In the passage from the book of Acts, the Bible relates Peter's words that the disciples witnessed what Jesus accomplished “in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem.” In spite of all this, Jesus was crucified but “God raised him from the dead on the third day” (v 40). Peter goes on to say that God “caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him” (vs 40-41).



The disciples were privileged witnesses to the work of Christ and his resurrection. But with this privilege comes a duty... “He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.” (v 42).

As Christians and as the Church, we are also witnesses of God's love and work through Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. In our daily lives, we can bear witness to the fact that Jesus saved us, that he died for our sins and rose again. Let us, then, also remember the duty which comes with this privilege: Jesus calls us to preach to the people! He is risen!

Comme les disciples qui ont été témoins privilégiés de l'œuvre du Christ et de sa résurrection, nous, chrétiens, sommes aussi des témoins de l'Amour de Dieu. Souvenons-nous alors aussi du devoir lié à ce privilège : Jésus nous appelle à prêcher au peuple ! Il est ressuscité !

Happy Easter! Joyeuses Pâques !

Jessica G Mensah

Bishop's Lent Appeal 2023: A Church Extension Opportunity at Rabat

The Diocese is seeking to develop an independent new chaplaincy in Rabat, the capital city of the Kingdom of Morocco, and within the Archdeaconry of Gibraltar. Morocco is officially a Muslim country. His Majesty King Mohammed VI very graciously permits the Church of England to operate in his country ministering to the Anglican faithful from abroad. This new work in Rabat builds on this special permission.

The current congregation there is dedicated to St. Augustine of Hippo, an African saint, reflecting its largely African composition, and they use a beautiful modern chapel, kindly donated for our use by the local Catholic Archdiocese, with whom we have good ongoing ecumenical relationships. Cardinal Cristóbal López is a personal friend of the congregation.

For the last eight years St Augustine's has been a growing outreach project run from the long established Church of England Chaplaincy in Casablanca which is a two hour train journey away. The distance has meant that only a quick Sunday service can be provided. The needs of the Anglican Community in Rabat are now at the point when it is time for a new and exciting step in faith – independence within the diocesan family! The congregation is embarking boldly on the next phase which will be a resident priest to further build up St Augustine's.



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Thursday 23 February	8	None	None
Friday 24 February	9	Josiah hearing the book of the law. 1873.	By Unknown author - The story of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=59735488
Saturday 25 February	10	Naamloos reliëf (in de volksmond 'Redder met kind' en 'Man met kind op schouder') van Maria van Everdingen op de zijgevel van het Reddingmuseum op Willemsoord in Den Helder	By Willemnabuurs - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=17958136
Sunday 26 February	11	Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. 2009.	By Lidia Kozenitzky, available from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Effib. , Attribution, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7769344
Monday 27 February	12	None	None
Tuesday 28 February	13	Gospel Book, 1475 by a scribe identified as Aristakes, for a priest named Hakob, Walters Manuscript W.540	By Walters Art Museum Illuminated Manuscripts - https://www.flickr.com/photos/39699193@N03/8509826031/ , CC0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=76790938
Wednesday 1 March	14	None	None
Thursday 2 March	15	None	None
Friday 3 March	16	None	None
Saturday 4 March	17	None	None
Sunday 5 March	18	Nicodemus and Jesus on a Rooftop. 1899.	By Henry Ossawa Tanner - idlespeculations-terryprest.blogspot.com , Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10980764
Monday 6 March	19	Lenten Labyrinth. Mike Moyers. 2012.	Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=57142 [retrieved February 21, 2023]. Original source: Mike Moyers, https://www.mikemoyersfineart.com/ .
Tuesday 7 March	20	None	None
Wednesday 8 March	21	None	None
Thursday 9 March	22	None	None
Friday 10 March	23	China 1944: A destitute boy with a wicker basket in the Poor People's Refuge in Changsa.	By Cecil Beaton - http://media.iwm.org.uk/iwm/mediaLib//36/media-36611/large.jpg This is photograph IB 4152C from the collections of the Imperial War Museums., Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=24242603
Saturday 11 March	24	Poste indicativo en el Camino de Santiago entre Biescas y Orós Alto (provincia de Huesca, España)	By Willtron, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=351498
Sunday 12 March	25	Cross-country skiing in Gatineau Park, the Capital's Conservation Park in Canada's Capetial Region.	By Marketingncc - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=17468825
Monday 13 March	26	A tiled cross at the Oakwood Cemetery Annex in Austin, Texas.	By Larry D. Moore, CC BY 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=123270532
Tuesday 14 March	27	None	None
Wednesday 15 March	28	None	None
Thursday 16 March	29	King David Playing the Harp. 1622.	By Gerard von Honthorst - dQFEsBzuiUpQ at Google Cultural Institute maximum zoom level, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=110608360
Friday 17 March	30	None	None
Saturday 18 March	31	None	None
Sunday 19 March	32	Clypping the Church at St Thomas-on-The Bourne on Mothering Sunday	By BabelStone - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=77686874
Monday 20 March	33	None	None
Tuesday 21 March	34	None	None
Wednesday 22 March	35	Parable of Christ as the Good Shepherd. Between 1580 and 1590.	By Marten van Valckenborch - http://www.khm.at/en/objectdb/detail/2006/?offset=5&list&Hash=02a2fc9d8914549d912974abfa3feac8 , Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=50456513
Thursday 23 March	36	None	None
Friday 24 March	37	Barn Owl at Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum near Tucson, Arizona	By P. Hughes - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=92905629
Saturday 25 March	38	The Annunciation. Botticelli (Alessandro di Mariano Filipepi). ca. 1485-92.	From The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Robert Lehman Collection, 1975, www.metmuseum.org
Sunday 26 March	39	Interior of New College Chapel: View of the 1969 Grant, Degens & Bradbeer organ and Jacob Epstein's stature of Lazarus.	By Stefan Schwarz - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=96451263
Monday 27 March	40	None	None
Tuesday 28 March	41	None	None
Wednesday 29 March	42	None	None
Thursday 30 March	43	None	None
Friday 31 March	44	None	None
Saturday 1 April	45	None	None
Sunday 2 April	46	None	None
Monday 3 April	47	Judas retiring from The Last Supper	By Carl Bloch - http://www.carlbloch.org/The-Last-Supper.jpg , Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10115340
Tuesday 4 April	48	Bedouin tent in the Syrian Desert	By yeowatzup - Bedouin Tent, Syrian Desert, CC BY 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=24520204
Wednesday 5 April	49	The Denial of Saint Peter. ca. 1610.	By Caravaggio - Self-scanned, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15216569
Thursday 6 April	50	Carrying the Cross. July 1605.	By Orazio Gentileschi - https://www.khm.at/objectdb/detail/790/ , Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=57400665
Thursday 6 April	50	Sending Out the Scapegoat. 1830-1904.	By William James Webb - http://www.lavistachurchofchrist.org/Pictures/Treasures%20of%20the%20Bible%20(Moses)/target17.html , Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6611855
Friday 7 April	51	None	None
Saturday 8 April	52	The Entombment of Christ. Ca. 1645.	By Mathieu Le Nain - https://www.mfa.org/collections/object/the-entombment-of-christ-34279 , Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=77811034
Sunday 9 April	53	Sőráby Church. Painting in the stands with motives: Jesus preaching in the present.	By Bernt Fransson - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=27726296
Bishop's appeal	54	Anglican congregation in Rabat.	From Bishop's letter.
List of illustrations	55	None	None
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Back Cover	57	The Denial of Saint Peter. ca. 1586-1643.	By Adam de Coster - http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2008/old-master-paintings-n08453/lot.58.html , Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=29683646

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The views expressed in the meditations are those of individual members of the church who contributed and are not necessarily those of the chaplaincy of Holy Trinity Pro-cathedral, Brussels.

Jane & David Brown

²⁵ <https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/features/lectionary>

