



First Sunday of Lent

A Short Service of Prayer for those at home

Light a candle
(please ensure this is done safely)

Pause for a moment of quiet

Words from Psalm 25

Show me your ways, O Lord,
teach me your path and guide me in truth,
for you are God, my Saviour.
Good and upright is the Lord;
he guides the humble in what is right
and teaches them his way.
Guard my life and rescue me,
let me not be put to shame.

A Reading from the Bible

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also stood in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the

garden; but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die." ' But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' Adam replied, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' God said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?'

Genesis, Chapter 2 & 3

Pause for Thought

As we begin Lent, we are reminded this is a season for reflection, a time to think about our character, our conduct and even our contribution to the wellbeing of others and the world in which we live.

The psalmist pleads with God, 'Guide me in truth and let me not be put to shame.'
Wise words and a worthy prayer!

The psalmist would have been familiar with the 'Law of the Lord' for Jewish life was built upon the Ten Commandments received by Moses, law that was meant to shape both social behaviour and maintain the wellbeing of the whole community of God's people.

In our modern and liberal world the importance of the eighth commandment, 'You shall NOT steal' can easily be overlooked and yet it has much to be commended for as morally it maintains the very foundation of a decent and Godly society.

The imperative NOT to do something finds its roots in the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden; with good reason, it could be said to have shaped the very nature of the law given later to Moses.

In a free society WE are given the freedom of choice to determine how we live.
Hopefully the things we do are biased in favour of doing good.

In the Garden of Eden 'everything' was good, God had made it so. It is God who places mankind (Adam & Eve) into the Garden and it is God who provides for all their needs. But woven into the good life they enjoyed was a caveat. 'YOU' God said, have the freedom to eat from any tree in the garden but you must NOT eat from the tree of knowledge, of good and evil.'

God had placed a prohibition order on mankind simply because to eat the fruit of this tree may do them harm, even kill them!

Despite such a categorical warning, Adam and Eve chose to wilfully ignore the wisdom of God, they rationalised what the consequences might be and wilfully chose to ignore the prohibition. In taking what was not theirs, they stole!
As a result the harmony between mankind and God was marred,
spoilt through the violation of God's boundaries.

This moment of 'choosing' resulted in the birth of self-deception and guilt.
Adam and Eve realised their mistake, they knew what they did was wrong
and their eyes were opened to their new nakedness.

The Law had been derived from the heart of God but not without encouragement to do good in this life, 'Walk in the ways the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and prosper.' Deuteronomy 5 v 33

There was incentive to walk humbly with God. Our individual freedom to choose our path in life is a fundamental facet of our being human and yet such freedom is balanced against the notion in life that what we do may not always be good for us.

Although we may never choose to take something without permission,
the element of 'temptation' is ever present in our lives
and is something we all have to wrestle with.

When we are tempted to do something we instinctively know we shouldn't,
it shapes our character, our conduct and our contribution to the wellbeing of others
and the world in which we live.

As we begin Lent, hear again the wisdom and prayer of the psalmist,
'Guide me in truth and let me not be put to shame.

Walk humbly in your truth with your God so that you may live long and prosper.

A Reflective Prayer

In the beginning, before time, before people,
before the world was begun, GOD WAS
Here and now, among us, beside us, GOD IS
In the future, when we have turned to dust
and all we know has found its fulfillment, GOD WILL BE
Not denying the world, but delighting in it,
not condemning the world, but redeeming it,
through Jesus Christ.

Acknowledging our human frailty, the sins we have committed in thought, word or deed and the things we have omitted to do that we ought to have done;

Let us seek God's mercy for our souls:

Have mercy on me, O God,
cleanse me from my sin.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.

AMEN

Prayers for the World

(Please sing the refrain where marked)

Have mercy on your people O God
in this new and challenging world that stands before us.
Bring healing and wholeness to people and nations,
and have pity on those suffering in their isolation.

Be still and know that I am God x 3

Strengthen all who are fearful of disease and death,
bring them to a new hope in Christ.
Hear the cry of those who lament the passing of loved ones,
grant them your peace and surround them with your presence.

I am the Lord that healeth thee x 3

Give rest to the departed
and bring them, with your saints, to glory everlasting.
We commend the world to you for which Christ died,
lead us in the pathways of truth and grant us your wisdom O God,
now and forever more.

In thee, O Lord, I put my trust x 3

Our Father, who art in heaven
Hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
But Deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory,
For ever and ever. AMEN



The Blessing

Saviour God,
may every breath we take be for your glory,
may every footstep follow the path of your Son.
Strengthen and settle us in our faith;
that we may be a blessing to the world and to each other,
now and always. AMEN.