

## Lent Reflections 2026: Week 2

### Wednesday 25th Matthew 4,8-11

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; <sup>9</sup> and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

"Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."

<sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

The third and final temptation - to bow down and worship Satan is, like the second, concerned with power - power over people and situations.

The temptation to misuse power and take control of situations, whether in large, global settings, or smaller, domestic ones, is something to which we can all fall prey.

"The real evidence that God's power is at work in our lives is not the ability to control other people, but the use of power we have to serve and empower others. Jesus himself .... the most powerful religious person ever to walk the earth showed the love of God through acts of service and self- sacrifice - the very opposite of a control freak." (Dawn, pp46-7).

To avoid temptation, we need to discern between right use of power - enabling and empowering others - and wrong use which puts us in charge and undermines others.

### **Prayer**

Loving Lord Jesus,

You laid aside your power and might to become the servant of all.

Grant to us, we pray, a spirit of humility and compassion, that we may always seek to put others before ourselves and to serve their interests rather than our own wishes.

Amen.

### Thursday, 26th Matthew 4,12-17

<sup>12</sup> Now when Jesus<sup>(a)</sup> heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. <sup>13</sup> He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the lake, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, <sup>14</sup> so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

<sup>15</sup> 'Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, <sup>16</sup> the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.'

<sup>17</sup> From that time Jesus began to proclaim, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'

The gospels tell us that baptising Jesus was one of the last things John did before he was imprisoned and executed by Herod.

Herod was a bully; and like all bullies he was weak and cowardly. So, he first arrested but protected John, then he allowed vanity and pride to succumb to the wiles of Salome and her mother.

Two classic responses to bullying are to either withdraw into oneself or to establish your own power by bullying others. Herod's treatment of John was a clear indication to Jesus of what he too might expect, but his response was neither one of shrinking fear nor counter-aggression. Returning to Galilee, he removed himself from the scene of John's death but he continued with - and even expanded - his own ministry. He refused to be diminished by those who threatened him.

### **Reflection**

Have you ever suffered from bullying? How did you respond and how do you feel about it now?

Have you ever been in the role of bully? How did you feel then? How do you feel about it now? What would you say to your victim if you met now?

As you reflect, offer your thoughts to God in *prayer*, seeking or giving forgiveness as you feel moved to do so.

### **Friday 27<sup>th</sup>: Matthew 4,18-22**

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup> And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.' <sup>20</sup> Immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>21</sup> As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. <sup>22</sup> Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Who do you "follow" on social media? Why - what attracts you to them and how do you feel when they follow you back - or decline to do so?

Jesus called - and continues to call - people to follow him but he never coerces them into doing so.

For most of us, answering God's call is a gradual process, a growing conviction that there is something we are being called to do; it may be "simply" a question of acknowledging God as the central point of our lives or it might be something more external, initiating a total change of direction.

The calling of the first disciples can help us to understand our own calling: the two pairs of brothers heard Jesus call and in a moment of divine revelation, left everything to follow him. In that moment nothing else mattered – they were totally absorbed in the idea of Christ as the promised Messiah. There are times when we too will be totally absorbed in our faith – perhaps in a new way of expressing it, and we will follow excitedly where our new idea – or vision – takes us.

Secondly, the example of the brothers shows us the importance of priority and perspective. We need to ensure that God is our priority and allow all other things to fall into place behind him. Family, friends and careers are all gifts from God and we should love and honour them as such.. God is love and if we truly put him first, then we cannot help but also show love to everyone else – family, friends and colleagues.

## **Prayer**

Heavenly Father,

We thank you for the gift of human love and friendship. We pray for grace to love and honour our friends and family as gifts from you, always remembering to put love for you above all else, for you are the source of all love and goodness. Amen.

## **Saturday 28th Matthew 4,23-5,4**

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan. When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

From solitude in the desert to calling a few select friends, to being surrounded by crowds of people, in Matthew chapter 4 Jesus has moved rapidly through a series of contrasting circumstances.

People were, no doubt, attracted by the message Jesus preached, but they also wanted to both witness and receive his healing. Jesus provided that healing willingly; he sometimes went out of his way to do so and we too can bring our physical needs to God. There is nothing wrong in that. However, we must also acknowledge our need of his spiritual gifts. However rich we may be materially, our real and deepest needs will only be satisfied when we come humbly to God and ask him to bless us with the gifts of faith and deep inner peace.

## **Reflection**

Where do you find it easiest to meet with God – in a crowd or in solitude? Through words, actions or a combination of both? When did you last make a real, conscious effort to meet with God?

What need is heaviest on your heart – for yourself or for somebody else? Take time now to name it and bring the need – and the person to God. Try to trust in him and his love to meet this need in the best possible way.

## **Sunday, March 1st Genesis 22,1-18(abridged)**

God said, ‘Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt-offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you.’ So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt-offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. Then Abraham said to his young men, ‘Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you.’

Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself

carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac said to his father Abraham, 'Father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' He said, 'The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?' Abraham said, 'God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son.'.....

When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.' And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt-offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place 'The LORD will provide'; as it is said to this day, 'On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.'

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, 'By myself I have sworn, says the LORD: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.'

When I was a teenager, I sent my boyfriend a card; on the front was a picture of a plastic duck and the message: I'd give up anything for you! Inside, the message continued: But please may I keep my little plastic duck?

As Christians, we are often challenged to consider what we would or would not be prepared to give up for God. The story of Abraham seems to imply that God might demand huge sacrifices from us. Notice here, though, that, ultimately, God did not demand that Abraham sacrifice his son – only that he should be willing to do so! Elsewhere in the Bible we are assured that God will not test us beyond what we can bear. If he demands something of us, he will also give us the strength we need to meet the demand. Nonetheless, we must be prepared to be challenged and so we should examine ourselves and ask if we have any little plastic ducks we are not prepared, if asked, to give up for God.

### **Prayer**

Most loving and generous God,

All things come from you and of your own do we give you.

Help us to put you first in our hearts and lives, willing to give our all to following you and your commands; obedient to your call on our lives, not counting the cost but willingly and trustingly to follow and obey. Amen.

## **Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>: Job 2**

One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. The LORD said to Satan, 'Where have you come from?' Satan answered the LORD, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.' The LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil. He still persists in his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason.' Then Satan answered the LORD, 'Skin for skin! All that people have they will give to save their lives. But stretch out your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.' The LORD said to Satan, 'Very well, he is in your power; only spare his life.'

So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and inflicted loathsome sores on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. Job took a potsherd with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes.

Then his wife said to him, 'Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse God, and die.' But he said to her, 'You speak as any foolish woman would speak. Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Now when Job's three friends heard of all these troubles that had come upon him, each of them set out from his home—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They met together to go and console and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him, and they raised their voices and wept aloud; they tore their robes and threw dust in the air upon their heads. They sat with him on the ground for seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

"Why me?" is a question often asked by those in the midst of some personal tragedy or suffering. Equally often we hear people demand to know why God allows such terrible things to happen – why a loving God sits back and allows war, violent crimes or natural disasters ruin or take countless innocent lives. Job's wife expresses these same feelings when she tells her husband to curse God and die. Job's piety has not protected him from suffering so what is the point of it? Job's friends also take the view that Job is suffering through some fault of his own.

Job alone, it seems, understands that faith is not a bargaining tool or a slot machine. We do not put good actions in and get blessings in return. We, like Job, may sometimes feel we are treated unjustly, that we don't deserve the hand we are dealt. At such times we need to remember that even though we may not like or understand what is happening, God is with us in the midst of our suffering and he will support and sustain us through it all.

### **Prayer.**

Merciful and loving God,

Thank you that you are always with us, holding us and caring for us.

When troubles and sorrows overwhelm us and we feel ourselves to be alone, help us to remember that you are there and to trust in your perfect love and strength. Amen.

## **Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>: Exodus 3,1-4**

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup>There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. <sup>3</sup>Then Moses said, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.' <sup>4</sup>When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.'

Moses was living a safe and settled existence. A little boring, perhaps, but safe! Then God called him, and in order to really hear and respond to that call, Moses had to divert from his predictable path – both metaphorically and literally – and explore what God wanted to show him and say to him.

Is God calling you to do something which will take you out of your comfort zone, away from all that is safe and familiar? If you think it is God calling, then listen, question, explore. If it really is from God, he will make it clear to you. In my experience he will then equip you with all the skills and courage you will need to go his way. It might not be easy, it might be challenging, even daunting, but it will be enriching, rewarding, exciting and fulfilling in ways you could never imagine.

### **Prayer**

God, give me the courage I pray, to be open to your call on my life.  
Give me ears to hear and eyes to see what you want to show me.  
Give me faith to trust and to follow your lead.  
Give me joy as I wholeheartedly trust, obey and serve you. Amen.