# The First Sunday Of Lent



Black History Month Martin Luther King Jr. last sermon at Canterbury Cathedral, Washington, DC

# February 21, 2021 10:30AM

## The Liturgy of the Word

The ministers enter in silence.

#### Introduction:

*Celebrant:* Welcome, everyone to Grace Episcopal Church in Muskogee Oklahoma. Welcome to those here in our church today and welcome to all of you online with us.

Today is the first Sunday in Lent, a season of prayer, fasting and preparation for the empty tomb. Many of us missed Ash Wednesday service this week due to the weather, so we will add a brief imposition of ashes after the sermon for those who desire to mark the beginning of their Lenten journey. In other words, even though Lent began last Wednesday, it's never too late to start.

Processional Hymn: #150 Forty days and forty nights (Vs. 1,2,3) Words: George Hunt Smyttan; Music: Martin Herbst



#### **Opening Acclamation**

*Celebrant*: Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins. *People:* **His mercy endures for ever. Amen.** 

#### Decalogue

*Celebrant*: Hear the commandments of God to his people: I am the Lord your God who brought you out of bondage. You shall have no other gods but me.

People: Amen. Lord have mercy.

Celebrant: You shall not make for yourself any idol.

People: Amen. Lord have mercy.

*Celebrant*: You shall not invoke with malice the Name of the Lord your God.

People: Amen. Lord have mercy.

Celebrant: Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy.

People: Amen. Lord have mercy.

Celebrant: Honor your father and your mother.

People: Amen. Lord have mercy.

*Celebrant*: You shall not commit murder.

People: Amen. Lord have mercy.

Celebrant: You shall not commit adultery.

People: Amen. Lord have mercy.

Celebrant: You shall not steal.

People: Amen. Lord have mercy.

Celebrant: You shall not be a false witness.

People: Amen. Lord have mercy.

*Celebrant*: You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

#### People: Amen. Lord have mercy.

*Celebrant*: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. *1 John 1:8,9* 

#### **Confession and Absolution**

*Celebrant:* Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbors.

Silence is observed.

- Celebrant & People: Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.
- *Celebrant:* Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**



#### Kyrie: #S-86



#### **Collect of the Day**

Celebrant:The Lord be with you.People:And also with you.

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

#### First Lesson: Genesis 9:8-17

Please be seated.

*Reader:* A reading from the book of Genesis.

God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

- *Reader:* The word of the Lord.
- People: Thanks be to God.

#### Psalm 25:1-9

- *Reader:* To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; my God, I put my trust in you; \*
- *People:* let me not be humiliated, nor let my enemies triumph over me.
- Reader: Let none who look to you be put to shame; \*
- People: let the treacherous be disappointed in their schemes.
- Reader: Show me your ways, O Lord, \*
- People: and teach me your paths.
- *Reader:* Lead me in your truth and teach me, \*
- People: for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.
- Reader: Remember, O Lord, your compassion and love, \*
- People: for they are from everlasting.
- *Reader:* Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; \*
- People: remember me according to your love and for the sake of your goodness, O Lord.
- *Reader:* Gracious and upright is the Lord; \*
- People: therefore he teaches sinners in his way.
- *Reader:* He guides the humble in doing right \*
- People: and teaches his way to the lowly.
- *Reader:* All the paths of the Lord are love and faithfulness \*
- *People:* to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

#### Second Lesson: 1 Peter 3:18-22

*Reader:* A reading from the first letter of Peter.

Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which

also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

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

#### Gradual Hymn: #641

Lord Jesus, think on me (Vs.1,2,3) F Words: Ann Warner/Music: William Bradbury

Please stand as you are able.



#### Gospel: Mark 1:9-15

Please stand as you are able.

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

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

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

Reader:This is the Gospel of the Lord.People:Glory to you, Lord Christ

#### Sermon:

#### New Beginnings

Last week some of us celebrated Chinese New Year, the year of the ox. Later this year, on September 6 in the month of Tishri, we will celebrate Rosh HaShanah, the Jewish New Year. Literally, the days of shouting or blasting which are supposed to be the period of personal introspection and repentance (sometimes called the "Days of Awe") ending ten days later on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. One take away from this might be that since Christians require forty days of this and Jews only ten, they are a bit faster at this than most of us.

We could dial the clock back another thousand years before the Jewish book of Leviticus to the Babylonian celebration of their new year in March at the vernal equinox. Like many ancient festivals, it was probably related to spring planting. In Babylonian writings, this was represented as the victory of the sky god, Marduk, over the evil sea goddess, Tiamat. Kings were crowned at this festival or their divine mandate to rule was renewed.

Every ancient culture had a calendar and a theology to go with it. Around 46 BC, Julius Caesar reconciled the ancient Roman, lunar calendar so our planet's journey around the sun would have the same date every year. He was off by about six hours. Caesar's calendar was known as the "Julian" calendar and the beginning of the new year was set then as January 1.

Of course, Christians celebrate our first day of the church's new calendar year on the first Sunday in Advent. That is the month before the nativity of Jesus. Although it is often obscured by Christmas commercialization and excitement, during Advent, we are supposed to anticipate Christ's second return to judge us. Unlike the Jews' ten days of introspection, Advent gives us a second, extended period in which to take stock of ourselves.

We are surrounded by many options for New Year observances, but there is one for me that will always stand out, Ash Wednesday. Yes, the most crowded month at the gym (outside of COVID times) is January when everyone returns from New Year's Eve with resolutions to work out more and lose weight. But for me, the more important weight to lose is the spiritual baggage I tack on every year. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of a period of physical discipline, prayer, fasting, introspection, and naming – the naming of each bag of stuff that I took on during the previous year. Some of that baggage was deservedly earned and some was unjust – that is, other people's junk that I willingly took on and claimed as my own.

Ash Wednesday is my New Year.

There are some things about Mark's account of the wilderness time that make me pause. Marks says that Holy Spirit immediately drove Jesus out into the wilderness. It was quick and unceremonious, and the same word was used here as when Jesus drove out the unclean spirits. The verb is closer to "throw out" because it is used many times before this to talk about throwing spears, stones, and other objects of violence. Without warning or hesitation, the Spirit THREW Jesus out into the wilderness the way we might throw out something no longer useful or unwanted.

Are there times when you feel no longer useful or unwanted?

The passage begins not with the fairy tale, "Once upon a time" but with "In THOSE days." What days are those? Mark is alluding to the time of John the Baptist's ministry telling us to prepare a holy way for the Lord, proclaiming a baptism for the forgiveness o sins, and telling the world that "the one who is more powerful than I (John) is coming after me. One who will *immerse* you in the Holy Spirit."

If you like to get down and wrestle with some of the deeper themes in the bible, you need to develop a list of the coded jabs in the ribs. I'm talking about times when the writer of the biblical text jabs you in the ribs with her elbow, winks, and says, "Pay attention. Get what's happening next." One item on that list is the combination of Jesus with the verb "come." Whenever Jesus comes as in John's proclamation of "the one coming after me", it foreshadows powerful, dramatic change.

Thirdly is how Mark leans on Isaiah for everything we are going to learn about Jesus. The Holy Spirit will be placed *into* (not on) God's chosen one to bring justice to all the peoples. Jesus is God's servant, the beloved, sent by God. Jesus is the messenger who brings the good news of the kingdom of God. And finally, the coming of the suffering servant who will be exalted. This coming is preceded by his being almost unrecognizable as a human. All these things said by Isaiah four centuries earlier are used by Mark and applied to Jesus.

Mark used this strange imagery or at least strange to us, because it was intimately familiar with the Jews and many non-Jews living in Palestine in the first century. It was a story of conquest by a foreign power, deportation, salvation by God followed by rebuilding and restoration. It is restoration of justice for the people of God after a period of suffering.

The Jews exiled in Babylon suffered for seventy years. True, some of the Jews flourished economically. Some took Babylonian wives and raised families there. Many of the Jews stayed behind when Cyrus of Persia led them back to Jerusalem. The ones who stayed behind had grown comfortable there. But the ones who returned to rebuild, worshipped the one God who had brought the Jewish people all that way since Egypt. They returned because their faith and their identity compelled them to. Like Jesus thrown into the wilderness, the faith of the Jews threw them back to Jerusalem to rebuild.

So, why is Mark's use of Isaiah important to us today on this first Sunday in Lent?

Because these next forty days for you are like Israel's seventy years in Babylon. At the end, you get to choose whether, like the Babylonians who stayed behind, you want to remain in the comfort of your life before Lent, as if nothing happened. Or you choose to return and rebuild. The servant will be with you to help you make powerful changes. You may not even recognize the servant as human. The servant will take all that baggage that has been dragging you down.

All you have to do is take the first step and commit to keep going. If you will, join me in saying, "I will begin my journey now."

The choice is up to you.

Silence for reflection after the sermon.

#### Invitation for a Holy Lent

*Celebrant:* Dear People of God: The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence and fasting. This season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the Church. Thereby, the whole congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word. And, to make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now kneel before the Lord, our maker and redeemer.

#### Nicene Creed

#### Please stand as you are able.

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come Amen.

**Prayers of the People** 

Please kneel, sit or stand.

- *Reader:* Bound together in Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit, let us pray with one heart and mind to God our Father.
- *Reader:* For peace from things that separate us from one another and for our salvation.
- People: Lord, have mercy.
- *Reader:* For the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the holy churches of God, especially...
- *People:* St. John's, Norman; St. Michael's, Norman; OU Campus Ministry; Diocese of Delaware; The Anglican Church of Central America.
- *Reader:* For this holy gathering and for those who enter with faith, reverence, and fear of God. *People:* Lord, have mercy.
- Reader: For...
- *People:* Michael, our Presiding Bishop; Poulson, our Bishop; Bob & Tom, our clergy; Tim & Pat, our wardens; vestry, delegates, all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God. Lord, have mercy.
- *Reader:* For the world and its leaders, our nation and its people. We pray for our leaders, especially...
- People: Joe, our President; Kamala, our Vice-president; Markwayne, our Congressman; James & Jim, our Senators; Kevin, our Governor; and Marlon, our Mayor. Lord, have mercy.
- *Reader:* For prisoners, the oppressed, all those in need or suffering, especially...
- People: Barbara & Family, Blackwell Family, Brad, Brewer Family, James & Shirley, Judy, Sherri, Bea, Eathen, Linda, John, Angie, Brian, Glen, Dante, Marilyn, Gary, Ann, Connie, Jan, Cliff, Gabriella, Esther, Ann, Ronald, Michael, Tom, Marlee, J.J., all those affected by the pandemic, all the front line workers involved with patient care, all first responders, law enforcement, all fire and safety personnel, all United States Military serving at home and abroad, and those whose suffering is known only to God.
- *Reader:* We pray for those who have died, *(especially...)*
- People: Lord, have mercy.
- *Reader:* For ourselves, our families, and those we love. We pray for those in our parish, especially ...
- People: Alex, Archie, Charles, Rozlyn, Rusty.
- *Reader:* Also those who are traveling, *(especially...)*
- People: Lord, have mercy.
- *Reader:* Remembering our most blessed Mary and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.
- People: To you, O Lord.

Reader: Heavenly Father, you have promised to hear what we ask in the Name of your Son: Accept and fulfill our petitions, we pray, not as we ask in our ignorance, nor as we deserve in our sinfulness, but as you know and love us in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### Peace

*Celebrant:* The peace of the Lord be always with you. And also with you. People:

#### Announcements, Birthdays & Anniversary Blessings

Celebrant: But do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Hebrews 13:14, 15

Lord Jesus think on me

#### Offertory Hymn:

# Doxology:

Please stand and sing as you are able.



We offer you these gifts which you have given us; this bread and this wine. With them we offer ourselves, our lives, and our work, to become through your Holy Spirit a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice. Amen.

### The Great Thanksgiving

Eucharistic Prayer B

#### Sursum Corda

People:

- Celebrant: The Lord be with you.
- People: And also with you.
- Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.
- People: We lift them to the Lord.

*Celebrant:* Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise. People:



Please be seated.

Please stand as you are able.

Ken Yadon

*Celebrant:* It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord; who was tempted in every way as we are, yet did not sin. By his grace we are able to triumph over every evil, and to live no longer for ourselves alone, but for him who died for us and rose again.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

#### Sanctus: #S-124



Bless-ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san-na in the high - est.

The Celebrant continues:

Please stand or kneel.

*Celebrant:* <sup>†</sup> We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son. For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me." <sup>†††</sup>

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me." <sup>+++</sup>

Therefore according to his command, O Father,

# Celebrant & People: We remember his death, We proclaim his resurrection, We await his coming in glory;

And we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, O Lord of all; presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine. We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant. Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. **AMEN.** 

#### Lord's Prayer

Celebrant: And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray,

Celebrant & People: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

A moment of silence is kept following the breaking of the bread.



Fraction Anthem: #S-161

At Grace Episcopal Church, all are welcome to receive Holy Communion.

*Celebrant:* The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

#### Communion Hymn:

Kenneth Yadon

### We Go Out To Do Our Work

#### Prayer of Thanksgiving

Celebrant: Let us pray.

Celebrant & People: Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### Blessing

*Celebrant:* May God bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever. **Amen.** 

Recessional Hymn: #559 Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us Words: James Edmeston; Music: William Henry Monk



#### Sending

Celebrant: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Thanks be to God. People:



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