**Welcome and Introduction**

A very warm welcome to you. We hope and pray that you are doing ok in these difficult and challenging times and we are delighted you have come to share with us in this worship today from near and far, you are so welcome.

I am Mark Poole, privileged to serve as curate in the four parishes of Dunnington, Holtby, Warthill and Stockton on the Forest here to the east of the great city of York

Today is the first Sunday of Lent and we remember Jesus’ baptism followed by his forty days and nights in the wilderness wrestling with temptation before finally emerging to start his public ministry proclaiming the good news of God. Good news that is for you and for me today in 2021.

We pray that this worship will bless you, feed you and encourage you as begin our pilgrimage together through Lent.

**Opening Prayer,**

Let us pray,

Lord Jesus, you faced your own temptation in the wilderness, help us now as we face ours. Be with us as we set aside this time, as we step away from our busyness, concerns and worries. Help us to look afresh with honesty at our own lives, struggles and motivations. And with you, help us turn our back on all that prevents us living in the fulness of life that you desire for us. Help us to learn to live more like you.

Amen.

**Lenten Invocations** (interspersed with music and accompanied by images)

**SUE STIGANT** God our Father,

We give you thanks and praise for the beauty of your universe, and for your creative power. As we encounter the world around us, teach us to find you in all things, and in the light of your supreme gift of life, continually remind us of your covenant with us. A covenant of love for us and for all creation.

**ELIZA GLADSTONE** Lord Jesus,

You laid aside the ways of power and might. You emptied yourself, taking the form of a servant.

You show God’s power made perfect in our human weakness.

We bring to you all that we are. We bring our vulnerability and sense of powerlessness.

We bring to you all our relationships, all who we depend on, and all who depend on us.

Help us to give and receive freely and wholeheartedly.

**ARNIE TWEDDLE** Lord Jesus, often un-seen, un-noticed, un-regarded, your touch brings healing, your word brings hope.

You stand at the door and knock.

You wait for our invitation.

Be with us now as we walk with you in gentleness and peace in the way that leads to life.

Amen.

**SUSAN WILSON** Make me to know your ways, O Lord;
teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.

Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for your goodness’ sake, O Lord! (Psalm 25:4-7)

**Song: Meekenss and Majesty**

Meekness and majesty manhood and deity
In perfect harmony the Man who is God
Lord of eternity dwells in humanity
Kneels in humility and washes our feet

O what a mystery meekness and majesty
Bow down and worship for this is your God
This is your God

Father's pure radiance perfect in innocence
Yet learns obedience to death on a cross
Suffering to give us life
Conquering through sacrifice
And as they crucify prays Father forgive

O what a mystery meekness and majesty
Bow down and worship for this is your God
This is your God

Wisdom unsearchable God the invisible
Love indestructible in frailty appears
Lord of infinity stooping so tenderly
Lifts our humanity to the heights of His throne

O what a mystery meekness and majesty
Bow down and worship for this is your God
This is your God
This is your God

Songwriters: Graham Kendrick (13729)

**MARK, EMMA AND JAMES POOLE Confession & Absolution** (interspersed with music)

God of love and forgiveness

Save me by your tenderness

From each deed of evilness

From each act of sinfulness

**Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.**

God of love and forgiveness

Save me by your tenderness

From each thought of carelessness

From each idea of wickedness

**Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.**

God of love and forgiveness

Save me by your tenderness

From each word of hurtfulness

From each speech of harmfulness

**Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, grant us peace.**

**Absolution**

May Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness, and was tempted as we are, yet without sin, bring us his pardon and peace. Amen.

**Reading:** Mark 1:9-15 **JOHN HALL**

**The Baptism of Jesus**

**9**In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. **10**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. **11**And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved;[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3A9-15&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24224a)] with you I am well pleased.”

**The Temptation of Jesus**

**12**And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. **13**He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

**The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry**

**14**Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3A9-15&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24227b)] of God,[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3A9-15&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24227c)] **15**and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3A9-15&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24228d)] repent, and believe in the good news.”

**Homily:** Keith Albans

The writer Douglas Adams in Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy wrote this: “Nothing travels faster than the speed of light with the possible exception of bad news, which obeys its own special laws.” We could all quote plenty of examples… good news doesn’t sell papers, does it?

Mark introduces Jesus to us from completely the opposite direction. “Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God” and as we know, Good News = Gospel

But when you think of some of the Bible stories – particularly those we tell to children – they don’t always feel like good news.

* The OT stories of Abraham and Isaac! It might turn out alright in the end, but what does it say about God? Or about Abraham? They’re hardly seen in a good light!
* Noah’s Ark is another one. The songs are good… “The animals went in 2 by 2…” and the one about the Unicorn! But is it good news? – “All creation wiped out except a few Israelites and a couple of each species including the really nasty ones and wasps!”

Today’s OT reading comes from the end of that story – Genesis 9. It’s an amazing story in the Hebrew understanding of God, and of our relationship with God… and it is hard to avoid the view that in it God come across as contrite – as regretting what has happened and determining that it shall never happen again.

God’s has seen through the reality of human nature with respect to humanity being made in God’s image… (c.f. Psalm 8) And God is a Covenant God… But the covenant God makes with Noah – unlike the ones with Moses and Abraham, does not seem to depend on any action on part of human partner – it is an act of grace, based on a promise of God of which the rainbow is the visible sign.

And we are given a promise is of a “home for life” wherein the created order will be dependable

There are ancient parallels with the Noah story, but the Hebrew account of the flood has a revelatory meaning: God acts covenantally, involving the entire creation in a relationship that not even the worst human wilfulness will overcome. That is Good news!

“Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God” I came across this quotation a while ago – it’s from Adam McLane, a blogger in America –

*“I have a fervent belief that if we want to reach a post-Christian society, we have to be Good News before someone will listen to Good News.”*

We’re used to the idea of Approval Ratings… we see them for individuals in the public sphere – PM vs Leader of the Opposition. They also exist for organisations – they show how people feel about the organisation – for example the NHS vs HMRC!

What about the approval rating of the Church?? What might people say? ‘You’re always after money!’ But it’s not as simple as that. I was once part of a Church where their story included an experience of arson – their Church burnt down and they had to build a new one. And the culprit was a local teenager who was angry with the Church because of how much time his father spent on Church business…

Are we good news? And can we become good news so that we can be in a position to share what we believe to be good news? Here’s a Lenten Challenge for us – How can we be good news?

Let me suggest one way in which we might do it, particularly in this season of Lent. It’s the challenge of how we tell the Jesus story this Lent and Easter… Because some of the ways in which we tell the story can come over just as offensively and distastefully as the story of Abraham and Isaac.

The language of our hymns doesn’t help. “Ride on, ride on in Majesty” includes this line… “The Father on his sapphire throne expects his own anointed Son” – an image of an absentee God twiddling his thumbs and looking at his watch!” That’s not what we believe either about God or about the crucifixion.

The language of substitutionary victimhood preaches well, but it also sets too many hares running in contemporary culture – similar to that in the Abraham story (Gen 22). The church has nbever had a single theory of the atonement for a good reason - none of them quite “work” on their own! And understanding what the theories are saying about God should be a key part of determining how we use the theories.

One of my favourite Charles Wesley hymns is not a well known one, and it has been excluded from our latest hymnbook. It begins with the line*, God of unexampled grace,* and in the hymn Wesley expounds his understanding that in the Cross, God was there. So in the second verse he continues, *Jesus, Lord, what hast thou done? Publish we the death divine, Stop, and gaze, and fall, and own was never love like thine.* And in the final verse his concludes, *Now discern the deity, Now his heavenly birth declare; Faith cries out: 'Tis he, 'tis he, My God, that suffers there!* Not some way away on a sapphire throne, but there on the cross.

How can we be good news? Think about how we tell the story – check out if it and we are to be good news, check what the story says about God…

And a second challenge is How do we live Good news? That is the point behind the original quotation.

When we look at Jesus’ portrayal in Mark’s gospel – it’s a very terse account – there is not a lot of flowery language. Jesus is active and sometimes ‘passive’– he both submits to actions of others and is active in bringing about what comes to be and in instigating what happens. We have a stark picture of Jesus – no gentle Jesus or Sabbath rest by Galilee – when God engages with humanity there is struggle and hardship involved. When Mark introducxes Jesus, he comes to bring good news, but he also say that the time is now – and that is the Kairos sense of ‘the decisive moment’. In Jesus, God intereacts and meets us in a telling way.

Our task, as we work our way through Lent, will be to develop the skills to spot the ways in which Jesus embodies the good news of God… And our calling is to be that Good news… based on the covenant which God made – which required no response other than to accept the offer and live with the consequences! This is not cheap grace, but it is grace! As we say in our Methodist Baptismal liturgy: “…All this for you, before you could know anything of it. In your Baptism, the word of Scripture is fulfilled: ‘We love, because God first loved us.’”

“Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God” – That’s what and who emerged from the 40 days in the wilderness – and that’s what he lived and taught and preached in the rest of the gospel… As we embark on our annual journey through Lent, we move towards the light of the empty tomb which casts the shadow of the cross along our route. Both together are the good news Jesus embodied, and which we must embody once more.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

**Song: Blessed be Your Name**

Blessed be Your name
In the land that is plentiful
Where Your streams of abundance flow
Blessed be Your name

Blessed be Your name
When I'm found in the desert place
Though I walk through the wilderness
Blessed be Your name

Every blessing You pour out
I'll turn back to praise
And when the darkness closes in, Lord
Still I will say

Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name

Blessed be Your name
When the sun's shining down on me
When the world's all that it should be
Blessed be Your name

And blessed be Your name
On the road marked with suffering
Though there's pain in the offering
Blessed be Your name

Every blessing You pour out
I'll turn back to praise
And when the darkness closes in, Lord
Still I will say

Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name

Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name

You give and take away
You give and take away
My heart will choose to say
"Lord, blessed be Your name"

God, You give and take away
You give and take away
My heart will choose to say
"Lord, blessed be Your name"

Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name

Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name

We trust You, Lord

Songwriters: Matt Redman, Beth Redman

**Intercessions and Lord’s Prayer JIM AND ALISON GILMOUR**

We find ourselves bewildered by events in health, communication, trade, politics and society. As we become accustomed to the quiet, reflective and sacrificial season of Lent may our prayers always be for others as well as ourselves; that we can fulfil Our Lord’s injunction to love one another. We ask Godto deliver us from temptation and give us grace in our Lenten resolutions. saying

Lord Hear us, **Lord graciously hear us**

We pray for ourselves in words from the Northumbrian office

 Lord,

Let our memory

Provide no shelter

For grievance against another

 Lord,

Let our heart

Provide no harbour

For hatred of another

 Lord,

Let our tongue

Be no accomplice

In the judgment of a brother

Lord Hear us, **Lord graciously hear us**

Strengthen Stephen and John our bishops with knowledge and understanding. May they and all church leaders show your people to be relevant and approachable May church be a refuge from evil. grant your people the confidence to share your message of welcome over the media that we use in these strange times. Open your word to everyone who needs stability and fellowship. Bless your folk who maintain currently silent and empty places of worship in preparation for the days when worshippers joyously gather.

Lord Hear us, **Lord graciously hear us**

Help humanity to be better stewards of the created world. May we live in harmony with the seasons and with all our fellow creatures

Lord Hear us, **Lord graciously hear us**

Encourage and support students, pupils, teachers, and youth leaders. Enable parents, godparents, and carers to convey to their charges that obstacles may be regarded as challenges. And to affirm that community responsibilities duly shouldered are steps on the path to your Kingdom.

Lord Hear us, **Lord graciously hear us**

Have mercy on the victims of the pandemic and of recent disasters. Bring relief in areas where nature is harsh and medicines and vaccines scarce or even non-exixtent. Give strength to those who work to provide aid : ambulance and paramedics, care workers, nurses and doctors.

Lord Hear us, **Lord graciously hear us**

We ask your blessing on our neighbours in our lovely villages. Keep them safe and healthy. Grant them patience to see that wilderness days are ones of opportunity. Reassure them that the Kingdom has come near.

Give comfort to those who mourn and those who care for the sick and troubled. We give thanks for those who have found peace through the saving death of your Son.

We pray through Christ, who was tempted as we are, yet without sin

In the words that he taught us

**Our Father**,

who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name;

Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the Kingdom the Power and the Glory

For ever and ever **Amen**

**Song: All My Hope On God Is Founded**

All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew,
me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

Pride of man and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray his trust;
what with care and toil he buildeth,
tower and temple fall to dust.
But God's power,
hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:
splendor, light and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore
from his store
newborn worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth the almighty Giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand
at his hand;
joy doth wait on his command.

Still from man to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ, his Son.
Christ doth call
one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.

**Final Prayer and Blessing**

As always, thank you to all of you who have contributed to and produced today's service. Our benefice Lent course begins on the evening of Thursday 25th February with an exploration of suffering. This will be live via zoom and everyone is very welcome to join us. We shall be emailing out details in the coming days, or you are welcome to contact me directly.

May I offer a Lenten benediction:

**Into Lent Blessing**

May the dust of the wilderness hold our footprints

lovingly

shaped as they are by your hurt

for dust remembers

May the journey into wilderness unfold

honestly

for honesty is the gift

your soul recognises as you

May your time in this wilderness

be shaped by space

rather than minutes

so there is time enough for all of you

May the stones in this wilderness

cry out your name loudly

that your spirit recognises the voice

that has been calling you always

And may you know this wilderness

has been expecting you

and you find between the stones

a promise growing

And may the blessing of God Almighty,

the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit

be with you and remain with you,

today, this holy season of Lent, and always. Amen.