

starters for Sunday

First Sunday in Lent

14 February 2016

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank Rev Dr George Whyte, Presbytery Clerk for Edinburgh, for their thoughts on the first Sunday in Lent.

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Quick Guide...

Helping people prepare for reading the Bible in worship can make a real difference. Overcoming nerves, reading in ways suitable to the text, speaking clearly etc.

You may wish to email these three links to the people reading Scripture on Sunday to support them in their involvement in worship: [Managing your nerves](#); [Creative readings](#); [Worship at the Lectern](#)

[Deuteronomy 26: 1-11](#)

This is the prescription for the Harvest Thanksgiving to be held when the people of Israel are settled in their promised land. The oral tradition from the time of Moses is passed to us through the written text by those who organised such events in the Jerusalem Temple.

A couple of other texts associated with the Thanksgiving Service are Psalm 24 and Isaiah's experience recounted in his chapter 6.

[Psalm 91: 1-2, 9-16](#)

This seems to be problematic for scholars. It is clearly some form of liturgy – For the king going out to battle? For convert being accepted into the faith? For the Temple priests welcoming in the worshipper? It sits comfortably within this Sunday's readings as in Luke 4:10 & 11 the Devil himself quotes two verses from the Psalm.

[Romans 10: 8b-13](#)

Paul continues with his intense letter to the beleaguered Christians in Rome – former Jews who still live in the Jewish quarter crushed into the tenements of the city and under intense scrutiny from those with whom they once shared a faith and the pagan world which practised yet another set of devotions. He writes to stiffen their resolve to stay true to the faith.



[Luke 4: 1-13](#)

Mark simply says that Jesus was tempted in the desert but Matthew and Luke offer more detail with Luke choosing to end with Jesus on the pinnacle of the Temple whereas Matthew sees him beating off the Devil after the experience of the mountain top.

All three Gospel writers see this time of trial as essential preparation for all that Jesus must face in the time ahead.

Sermon Ideas

Here are three starting points:

- The bible doesn't tell us what the devil looks like. It doesn't even say how he sounds. But it does tell us when the devil works. In the story of Jesus in the desert we learn that he is tempted by the devil at the moments of success and weakness. Jesus has been baptised in the Jordan and affirmed by the Holy Spirit yet soon after he is alone and hungry in the wilderness.

As we seek to walk in his footsteps here is Christ's example for us when everything is going well and for those times when we struggle and want to give up. These are the tempter's greatest opportunities.

- "Just be yourself," is a common mantra. But it can be problematic because sometimes we do too much of it and sometimes too little. Temptations make us lose the balance. The story that gives Lent its length tells of the struggle Jesus had to be himself. He is tempted to satisfy himself, assert himself, prove himself. He is tempted to deny himself, to go against who he is and what he is called to be and do. In the end he remains himself with that precious balance of being both a human being and the Son with whom the Father is well pleased.

Can we use Lent to really be ourselves, to be both who we are and whose we are?

- Or if you want to use Deuteronomy. The Harvest Thanksgiving service was there to remind God's people of where they lived (the Promised Land), who had brought them there and what God had called them to be and to do. They came to worship as citizens of the Holy City.

Lent should raise with us these same questions of "citizenship" –

- where do we live (the Kingdom and the parish)?
- how did we get here?
- who brought us here?



- where are the boundaries?,
- who is our neighbour?
- what responsibilities for the care do we carry,?

Lent asks of God's people questions of setting, loyalties, rights and duties.

Prayers

St Paul said: God keeps faith and will not let you be tested beyond your powers.

Let us pray.

O God as in Lent we walk with our Lord on the road to the cross,
we seek the strength which he found in wilderness and crowd.

O God you are with us in our glory,

in the days when we are the centre of attention

in the moments when we taste victories great and small

in the times when all is warmth and sunshine

So today we seek to learn from Jesus who laid down power and status to trust in you.

O God you are with us in our shame

in the day when we wish for invisibility

in the moments when our failure is laid bare

in the times when our guilt shadows everything

So today we seek the comfort of Jesus who noticed the troubled
and troubled himself with the worthless.

O God you are with us in the routine

in the days when all is familiar

in the moments when we long for a change

in the repetitive tasks and duties which we must face

So today we seek the faithfulness of Jesus who persisted with his calling and with his less than
persistent friends.



Father, in this holy season of Lent teach us to walk with our Lord whatever life may bring that in every circumstance we may give glory to the one who loved us in our sinfulness

For we ask these things in his name.

Amen.



In addition to the above prayers, prepared by our contributor, other prayers may be found in *Living Stones* which is the theme for this year's Pray Now. It was also the theme for Heart and Soul 2015. *Living Stones* is available from [St Andrew Press](#).

Time With Children

This year sees the unusual combination of the first Sunday in Lent and Valentine's Day. It might be asserted that children and young people may know much more about the customs related to the latter than the former. Perhaps there is scope for a question which brings the two occasions together: *What would you give up for the one you love?*

Musical Suggestions

- CH4 55 Safe in the shadow (paraphrase of Psalm 91)
- CH4 337 Forty days and forty nights
- CH4 338 Jesus, tempted in the desert
- CH4 490 Jesus, lover of my soul
- CH4 664 O Jesus, I have promised



Additional Resources

Resourcing Mission



[Resourcing Mission](#) is host to Starters for Sunday and other key mission resources for download and purchase. Online booking is available for [Mission & Discipleship events](#). Please check back regularly, as new items are being added all the time. If there is something you'd like to see on this new site, please [contact us](#) via the website.

Prayer Resources

These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might look for in prayers. [Living Stones](#) is available from [St Andrew Press](#).



Music Resources

The hymns mentioned in this material are ideas of specific hymns you might choose for this week's themes. However, for some excellent articles on church music and ideas for new music resources, please check out our online music pages [Different Voices](#).

Preaching Resources



These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might preach this Sunday. [Preachers Perspectives](#) is a resource where we have asked twelve preachers to share the insights they have gathered through their experiences of writing and delivering sermons regularly.

Scots Worship Resources

[The Kirk's Ear](#) - Scots in the Kirk series for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and other times of the year

[Wurship Ouk bi Ouk](#) - Metrical psalms, hymns, prayers and words for worship

[Scots Sacraments](#) may give you helpful material if you are celebrating Communion or have a Baptism.

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to express its thanks to the Rev Dr George Whyte, Presbytery Clerk for Edinburgh for providing us with this Sunday's material.

Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.

