

St Marc Grenoble
Sunday 6th March 2022 (1st in Lent)

Psalm 91

Luke 4: 1 - 14

Romans 10: 8 - 13

'Who will you call'

Good Morning everyone, whether you're here, or on Zoom ...

As many of you will be aware, it has been a pretty tough week for me; I'm really glad to be back in Grenoble briefly, before I have to go back to England for my Mother's funeral; details aren't finalised yet, but we will have to go back for me to conduct her funeral and to sort out all the legal details.

I really want to thank you all for your prayerful support while I was away, and particularly since my Mother's death on Wednesday. Thank you.

Let's Pray...

Today is the 1st Sunday of Lent, we'll think about Lent a bit more in a minute. But, first, let's think about today's readings. Two very interesting readings again this week; you'll have noticed I changed the order around, because I think that probably makes it all a little easier to understand.

But, I really want to know what you noticed in the readings? (Microphone?) What jumped out at you? What challenged you? What puzzled you?

We need to remove some negative thoughts, which surround Lent and give it the positive reflection it demands. We also need to face up to some of the challenges to our faith that this 'penitential' season highlights for us.

For me, Lent offers 3 tracks or themes:

Lent is a time of reflection – reflection on our own weaknesses, failings and inadequacy, for the work God has given us to do. This enables us to come before Him in confession, seeking His forgiveness for our failings and his absolution (His cleansing) and restoration.

We're clearly told in 1 John 1:9 'if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

Lent is also a time of refreshment or renewal, (a time to focus on God). We should reflect on the way the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, to prepare Him for His earthly ministry.

The Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness; and many theologians relate the forty days of preparation Jesus spent in the wilderness to the forty years the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, following God, while they were being prepared for life in the 'Promised Land'.

But, the times when we are closest to God are often also the times when Satan tries to tear us away from that loving and intimate relationship with our heavenly Father; trying to undermine us with doubt and unnecessary desires.

For me, it's really encouraging that Jesus was not exempt from that temptation as He was being prepared for His earthly ministry. The devil tried to divert Him; but, Jesus gave us a clear example of how we should respond to temptation.

Never enter into dialogue or negotiation with Satan, (What needs to be expanded in NO?) - he's far more devious than we are.
Use the power of God's word as your guide.

Lent is also a time of preparation, for the work God has for us to do. By focusing on the wonder of God, we're reminded that, in our own strength, we're completely inadequate for the tasks that confront us; but, if we allow the Holy Spirit to empower us, we'll have the ability to do whatever He leads us to do.

That's a brief reflection on our Gospel reading, from Luke; but I'd like to close with some words of encouragement from our New Testament reading (Romans 10: 8 - 13)

I was really struck by the freshness of the Message translation: 'It's the word of faith that welcomes God to go to work and set things right for us'

'This is the core of our preaching. Say the welcoming word to God - Jesus is my Master, embracing body and soul. ... that's it. You're not doing anything, you're simply calling out to God, trusting Him to do it for you. That's salvation'

I think I told you last week about some of the words I'd had with my mother, while she was so ill. When she was in pain and calling out 'Nobody loves me, nobody cares.' I was privileged to be able to tell her that I loved her, but far more important - Jesus loves her too.

You may not realise that I've been praying to God, for well over a year, that He would take my Mother home. I couldn't understand why (as I thought) He didn't answer my prayer.

She was not a woman of faith, and never wanted me to talk about Jesus - but she really needed to hear about Jesus' love for her..

God knew the challenge I'd had! Then when she was really struggling, He gave me just the right opportunity to tell her about Jesus' love for her... He gave me the opportunity and the words.

I may have said last week that, having told her Jesus loves her, I sang the lovely old chorus, which has encouraged me through quite a few hard times: 'Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so' - except I changed the words to 'Jesus loves you this I know ...'

This time my mother was not able to walk away, or change the subject - she heard what she needed to hear, and I was able to tell about Jesus' love for her a few times over the days I was there with her.

She told me she loved me so much, which is not something she has ever done very often; she wanted to kiss me too - very unusual.

Then, I left to come home, promising to 'see her soon' ... But the job was done! She'd heard that Jesus loves her - He was now able to do His work.

I came home - and Jesus took her home to be with Him early the very next morning! ... Praise the Lord!

You see, it says: 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' Or, as The Message puts it - "Everyone who calls: 'Help God!' gets help.'

Paul uses the words in Roms10; Peter uses the same words in Acts (2:21);

But, they both learnt them from the prophecy of Joel (2:32) 400 years earlier: 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'.

Our God is there for us, whenever we cry out

And, Hebrews 13: 8 assures us: 'Jesus the Messiah is the same, yesterday, today and forever.' Or, as The Message translates it 'Jesus doesn't change - yesterday, today, tomorrow, He's always totally Himself.'

So, now, as we close, let us call on the name of the Lord for our salvation and healing. **Amen**