

2nd SUNDAY OF LENT: Sunday 5th – 11th March 2023

Greetings from Eileen


Dear Friends,

It occurs to me that Lent is a time when some are drawn to consider the part of faith, specifically faith in God, in their lives. We are delighted that through the privilege we have of engaging with children in 3 primary schools, their parents and the staff, that more young families and children are alerted to consider this personally.

In my 4 parish churches, we are also blessed with grandparents among our congregations. And you may be a grandparent who is praying for your family.

In 11 months since we introduced Messy Church, 20 families have come to church, and Youth Saints continues to be a place where young people increasingly know they can be safe and confident in God's presence.

Will you join me in encouraging family, friends, neighbours, the young and the adult, to consider confirming their faith?



**Would you like to
CONFIRM
YOUR FAITH?**

Are you baptised and feel ready to affirm promises for yourself and confirm your faith in Jesus Christ?


At a Confirmation Service, we come together to encourage and witness youth and adults confirm the promises that were made when they were baptised

If you have not been baptised, you can be baptised and confirmed at the same service

The Bishop of Durham, The Rt Rev'd Paul Butler, will be conducting confirmations St Mary's Church, Staindrop on Thursday 11th May 2023 at 7pm, when we hope to celebrate confirmations from our 4 parishes of Winston, Gainford, Ingleton, and Staindrop

Get in touch with me or Claire Mead our Missioner for Children, Young People and Families, churchwardens, or your headteachers by Mothering Sunday 19th March 2023

- Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop



The Bishop of Durham will be with us in St Mary's Church, Staindrop to conduct confirmations on Thursday 11th May 7pm. Anyone who would like to know more or feels ready to be confirmed, should get in touch before 31st March.

Have you found time each day to reflect as a Lenten discipline? I have managed 15 minutes each morning listening to 'Dust and Glory' produced by Bishop Emma Ineson for The Archbishops:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/what-we-believe/lent-holy-week-and-easter/dust-and-glory-resources-lent-2023> If you download the app, you can listen to the audio reflection and dwell on it.

SERVICES this Sunday 5th March 2023

9.15am St Mary's, Staindrop – Lay-led (The Worship Group)

9.30am St Andrew's, Winston – Communion (Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop)

10.45am St Mary's, Gainford – Communion (Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop)

11.00am St John the Evangelist, Ingleton – No service

Note: MESSY CHURCH is a week earlier - next Sunday 12th March at St Mary's, Gainford at 3.30pm to make gifts and learn about Mothering Sunday

May God bless us, that in us may be found love and humility, obedience and thanksgiving, discipline, gentleness and peace.

Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop

NOTICES:

- † **LENT LUNCHES:** Come, share a light meal together, as we remember others who would welcome our donations that make a great difference to their lives.



ST CUTHBERT'S DAY: It is a delight to read Kim Crisp's write up of the pilgrimage walks organised by Joyce Wilson and led by her and others from St Andrew's, Winston. This year, the **annual St Cuthbert's Camino Pilgrimage from Finchale Priory to Durham Cathedral**, takes place on **Saturday 18th March starting at 12.30pm, ending with the Eucharist at 4pm in the cathedral.** I am representing both the diocese and the cathedral at Finchale Priory. **We have reserved a minibus** to take us to Finchale and collect us from the cathedral for our return for a small donation.



Please sign up in church this week and at latest by Sunday 12th March if you would like a seat on the minibus.

- † **PRAYERS:** Please pray for the families and loved ones of the recently departed whose funerals take place in the coming weeks:
- **Morris Race** of Staindrop: Thursday 16th March 12.15 at St Mary's, Staindrop followed by Committal at Wear Valley Crematorium
 - **Fred Beadle** of Staindrop: Friday 17th March 11am at St Mary's, Staindrop followed by a Private Burial at Staindrop Cemetery
- † **PCC MEETINGS:** Ingleton St John the Evangelist PCC Tuesday 7th March 3pm; and Gainford St Mary PCC Wednesday 8th March 7pm (in church)

Collect for the 2nd Sunday of Lent

Almighty God,
 you show to those who are in error the light of your truth,
 that they may return to the way of righteousness:
 grant to all those who are admitted
 into the fellowship of Christ's religion,
 that they may reject those things
 that are contrary to their profession,
 and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same;
 through our Lord Jesus Christ,
 who is alive and reigns with you,
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and for ever. Amen

Post Communion Prayer

Almighty God,
 you see that we have no power of ourselves
 to help ourselves:
 keep us both outwardly in our bodies,
 and inwardly in our souls;
 that we may be defended from all adversities
 which may happen to the body,
 and from all evil thoughts which may assault
 and hurt the soul;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.
 Amen

First Reading: Genesis 12:1-4a

¹ Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'^[a]

⁴ So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Gospel Reading: John 3:1-17

¹ Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ² He came to Jesus^[a] by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' ³ Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' ⁵ Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." ⁸ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' ⁹ Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

¹¹ 'Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.'^[i]

¹⁶ 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷ 'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Sermon, 1st Sunday of Lent: Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop, 26th February 2023 (Genesis 2:15-17, 3: 1-7, Matthew 4:1-11)

Since the beginning of Creation, the devil Satan had taken to defying God especially by deceiving people, tempting us with his cleverness and suggestive lies. He began by luring a woman, then delighting in the success of his temptation.

Lent is the specific time during which we are called to humility. Out of dust, God gave breath and life to humankind, as he had given all living creatures. God chose to make humankind, that our earthly bodies are accompanied by mind, spirit, and soul in God's image. Satan exercises cunning to prove his power by his propositions to persuade us against God. Listen again to the Devil tempting Eve: *'He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' and then "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'*

What God had actually said to Adam and Eve was this: *'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'* As Adam and Eve were created in God's image, they already had access to the knowledge of good and evil. They were already like God and did not need to eat of it to attain this.

Satan lies against and about God to prove his power over God to win for himself humankind. It is true that all sorts of values-busting things happened when Eve fell for Satan's lies: disloyalty, bringing someone else into sin, disobedience that led to them giving up life for death.

Several hundreds of years later, Abraham was to succumb to temptation. God had blessed Abraham and his wife Sarah promising that she would be "*a mother of nations*" (Genesis 17:16), that she would conceive and bear a son. But when Sarah was 90 neither Abraham nor she believed God would do as he had promised. Temptation is by nature subtle, with convincing points, conceived to appeal.

Did God say to Adam and Eve that they would not know good and evil? No. They were only told that the consequence of eating from *'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'* would be that they would die. Eve fell for Satan's lie that she would know good and evil by eating from the tree, yet sadly, the truth is that the knowledge of good and evil was already in God's gift to them.

For Abraham, the subtle deception goes something like this: God promised that Sarah would be the mother of nations. But perhaps what God meant was that this would be achieved through the slaves who belonged to her, after all they are as much her own as her own body. They worked out that God meant for them to have a son via a surrogate. Sadly, Sarah reacted against her slave's pregnancy when she realised Abraham had persuaded her to sin. She mistreated Hagar and banished her. Hagar gave birth to her and Abraham's son Ishmael, and from this time onwards the divided family of Jews and Muslims has yet to be reconciled.

Satan's audacity extended to testing Jesus, saying: '*If you are the Son of God...*' He suggests to Jesus that his identity needed proving. Jesus' replies demonstrate that he was secure in his knowledge of God His Father, saying: "*Do not put the Lord your God to the test.*"

Have you noticed even at such a time that Jesus extends his compassion to Satan? Jesus tells Satan that God is Satan's Lord and God! "*Do not put the Lord your God to the test.*" But determined to be master over God, Satan gives Jesus a vision of all the kingdoms of the world, and suggests they are within Satan's gift to offer Jesus. Again, secure in the truth, Jesus invites Satan to: "*Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.*"

Friends, we can easily recognise Satan's temptations:

1. Satan tries to turn us away from trusting God
2. Satan triggers ideas of how we can manipulate what God has commanded and distorts what is in scripture
3. Satan feeds on occasions when we forget God – after all God says He would never leave us
4. Satan persuades us that people are just fine without God, that it does not matter whether anyone is bothered about His love for us
5. Satan delights in our times of difficulty stirring our feelings to doubt God's love and presence.
6. Satan plays on our vulnerability, stirring questions such as: "*How can an all-loving God allow a natural disaster to take the lives of 50,000?*"; and: "*Why did God let my Nan, my Granddad, my Mum, my Dad, my Son, my husband, my wife, suffer?*"

We shall all be tempted, and indeed we have all been tested. By Jesus' example, we are able to adopt a secure defence against the Devil. Jesus was secure about his identity: He is the Son of God in whom God the Father is well pleased. He is the Son who was with the Father from the beginning and on whom the Holy Spirit rests. We likewise can be secure in our identity: we belong to God; we are His children, and co-heirs with Christ.

When I have failed the test of temptation, my sense of guilt takes away the joy that God desires for us. I have learnt how to restore God's joy. I repeatedly cultivate what Jesus said against Satan: '*Away with you, Satan!*' We can be tempted to hold on to our feelings of guilt and regret. Some people are scourged by regret all through their lives. Satan steals their joy. Again and again, Satan's deception must be turned away.

God gave His Son to cleanse and free us from remaining in sin. We know that '*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, would not perish but have everlasting life*' (John 3:16)

So, we are back to Eve and Adam. Jesus has restored the life that Satan thought he had stolen from humankind. Satan's power is as it were simply 'hot air'. It does not have a hold on anyone who turns to Christ and belongs to God. Thanks be to God.

Amen