

First Sunday of Lent
For Groups Meeting from February 14 through February 20

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: Holy God, heavenly Father, in the waters of the flood you saved the chosen, and in the wilderness of temptation you protected your Son from sin. Renew us in the gift of baptism. May your holy angels be with us, that the wicked foe may have no power over us, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER

Share: How did last week's scripture (Mark 9:2-9) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Saturday and Sunday? – How has 'inviting' changed in this time of social distancing? Do you know how to forward the YouTube worship video to share with others?

Hear: Mark 1:9-15

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. In this text, we hear the first words Jesus speaks in the entire gospel of Mark. This is his thesis statement about what he is going to do and who is going to be. What do Jesus' first words say about his ministry?
2. The same spirit that descends on Jesus during his baptism drives him into the desert. Any ideas on why that might be? Did Jesus need to be in the wilderness for some reason?
3. Mark's temptation is really short. All he includes is that the wilderness holds great danger but Jesus was powerfully protected at the same time. Take a quick look at one of the other temptation stories (Luke 4:1-13 or Matthew 4:1-11). What are the differences? What is similar?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Mark 1:15 states that, "The time is fulfilled," in other words "The time is here." Think about an important time in your life. How did you prepare for that moment? What difference would it make if you found out that special time has already begun?
2. We rarely volunteer to spend time in the wilderness. Jesus didn't go willingly into the wilderness either but was sent by the Spirit. Think about a wilderness time (a time of difficulty or hardship) in your life. In what ways did you learn or grow?
3. Jesus talks about repentance which means to turn back to God or to stop and do something different. Repentance requires change. Can you think of a time in your life when you experienced change for the better? Who or what helped you make that move? Why might this be helpful to think about as we begin Lent? Are you taking something on or giving something up for Lent?

Prepare: Memorize this verse: "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.*" (Mark 1:15) How do you participate in bringing about the kingdom of God here and now?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 25:1-10. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

When we hear the words “the kingdom of God” we might picture a faraway place where we go when we die, but when Jesus talks about the kingdom of God coming near, he is speaking about something that is happening right now. With the first words spoken by Jesus in Mark’s gospel, he announces the realization of God’s intentions for humanity and all of creation. This means bringing new realities into existence and the rest of Mark’s gospel is about Jesus demonstrating what these realities look like. As 21st century followers of Jesus, we are participants in bringing about God’s kingdom here and now. This is such a fitting text to begin Lent because Lent is often a time to take stock and reflect on our own spiritual journey. Participating in the kingdom of God implores us to new understandings that help us to see the world through God’s eyes. It means hanging with people others have no time for, thinking about others more than ourselves and loving extravagantly expecting nothing in return. Thankfully, like Jesus, we are blessed by God before we are sent out into a world full of wild beasts, devilish temptations, and trials.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd
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Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those
Who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
And the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
Born of the virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified died and was buried;
He descended to the dead,
On the third day he rose again;
He ascended into heaven,
He is seated at the right hand of the Father,
He will come to judge the living and the
dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
The holy catholic church,
The communion of saints,
The forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body,
And the life everlasting. Amen.