

with respect and love and freedom; Seeking justice, not exploitation or abuse; Believing in the power of small actions of love: signalled in the 'yeast', 'seeds', 'salt', 'light' - all gentle things which work slowly but powerfully; Wanting people to know God as a friend of life; Knowing God as not overpowering but 'seducing' with goodness.

After this ordeal he emerges with a vision of what he is called to do, and what to avoid. He heads north to Galilee to draw people with the Good news of God's tremendous, compassionate love for them and to encourage them to choose ways of love.

7. Closing Prayer

Compassionate and loving God,
you created the world for us all to share,
a world of beauty and plenty.
Create in us a desire to live simply
so that our lives may reflect your
generosity.

Creator God, you have given us
responsibility for the earth,
a world of riches and delight,
create in us a desire to live sustainably,
so that those who follow after us
may enjoy the fruits of creation.

God of peace and justice,
you give us a capacity to change,
to bring about a world that mirrors your
wisdom.

Create in us a desire to act in solidarity
so that the pillars of injustice crumble
and those now crushed are set free.

Apricot

It's possible that the fruit mentioned
in Genesis 2:9 was an apricot.
Apricots were often referred to as
'apples of gold'.



Apple of Gold

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Fresh Dreams for Lent
First Sunday of Lent 2022

1. Welcome and opening prayer

Slow us down, Lord!
Ease the pounding of our hearts
by the quietening of our minds.
Steady our frantic pace
with a vision of the eternal reach of time,
the calmness of the everlasting hills.
Break the tensions of our nerves
with the soothing music
of the singing streams
that live in our memories.

Help us to know
the magical power of sleep,
teach us the art of taking minute vacations
of slowing down
to look at a flower;
to chat with an old friend
or make a new one;
to pet a dog;
to watch a spider build a web;
to smile at a child;
or to read a few lines from a good book.

Remind us each day
that the race is not always won by the
swift;
that there is more to life
than increasing its speed.

Let us look upward
into the branches of the towering oak.
And know that it grew straight and strong
because it grew slowly and well.

Slow us down, Lord,
and inspire us to send our roots deep
into the soil of life's enduring values
that we may grow towards the stars
of our greater destiny.

Orin L. Crain

2. Gospel text: Luke 4:1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." Jesus answered: "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

The devil then led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the Kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendour; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will be yours."

Jesus answered: "It is written: 'Worship the Lord God and serve him only'"

The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple," "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written: 'He will command the angels concerning you to guard you carefully; They will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'

Jesus answered: "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until the appointed time.

3. Quiet time...

People can read over the story again and pick out a word or short phrase that strikes them and say it out loud. When everyone has had a chance to speak, people can silently listen to what God is saying to them in their hearts linking it with themselves, their community, society or the world. Then some sharing. NB This is not time for argument.

4. Reflection Questions for

Luke 4:1-13

1. The power of small actions of love - when have you noticed that?
2. What fake promises are around at the moment? Why?

5. Prayers

Mentioning people and situations we want to pray for.

6. Background Notes for

Luke 4:1-13

Jesus had lived with 30 years of crippling taxes, peasants losing land, Roman brutality, crucifixions and simmering violence. He knew the anger, resentment and disillusionment around. At the moment of his baptism by John, the Spirit dormant within him stirred. His heart was filled with the desire to follow what his beloved Father wanted.

The interlude in the wilderness illustrates the temptations that constantly shadowed him - 40 years in Hebrew code signifies one's whole life- to choose easier, more attractive ways of winning people:

- To be able to offer people inexhaustible material resources, free, unbounded power.
- To demonstrate limitless personal power and dazzle them into following - extreme popularity.
- To bowl them over with extraordinary signs no one else has ever performed.

He rejects these fake promises; instead he accepts the condition of his humanity and recognises the resources that are within his reach: Sharing resources; Approaching people

7. Closing Prayer

O breath of God, transforming breath
rise up out of the earth
surround us with your liberating power.

Free us from the things that keep us
tied only to what we know.
Show us the things that stop us
from being a blessing in the lives of others.

Take away our resentment, fear, apathy,
indifference, greed.
Empty us that there may be a
beautiful space in us for new things
to happen.
Shower us with your creating love.

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Fresh Dreams for Lent
Second Sunday of Lent 2022

1. Welcome and opening prayer

God, in whom is peace,
we praise you.

We praise the unexpected gift of peace
which steals softly into our frenzied
activity.

And gives us spaces of tranquillity.

We praise the hard-earned work of peace
which struggles through our
anger and bitterness
to nudge us into forgiveness and
new beginnings.

We praise the shining dream of peace
which beckons and inspires us
to confront violence and injustice
with words of hope and acts of
commitment.

We praise the mysterious peace
which lies beyond our imagination,
our efforts and our dreams
your gift of peace to a longing world.

Jan Berry

2. Gospel text: Luke 9:28b - 36

Jesus took Peter, James and John and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep, but becoming fully awake they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As they were about to part from him, Peter said to Jesus: "Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

But he did not know what he was saying.

While he was speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him." After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.

3. Quiet time...

People can read over the story again and pick out a word or short phrase that strikes them and say it out loud. When everyone has had a chance to speak, people can silently listen to what God is saying to them in their hearts linking it with themselves, their community, society or the world. Then some sharing. NB This is not time for argument.

4. Reflection Questions for

Luke 9:28b - 36

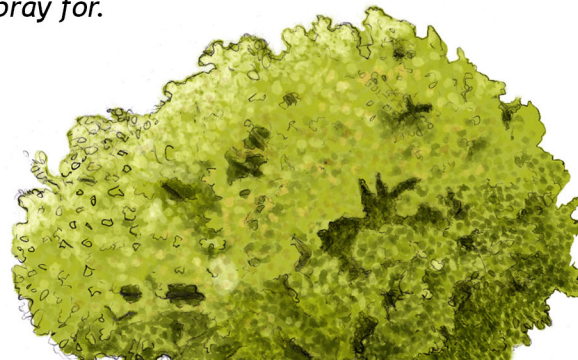
'I love to brighten up dark lives
and rid sad hearts of lonely cries'

Brendan Kennelly in the poem 'Hope'

Who comes to mind when you read these words?

5. Prayers

Mentioning people and situations we want to pray for.



6. Background Notes for

Luke 9:28b - 36

It's obvious the people around Jesus expected him to do all kind of things: change their situation and better the world. This is what his disciples wanted him to do and all his followers. They dreamed of the end time, 'eschaton' (the end to evil - expulsion of the Romans) and were waiting for a special intervention by God on their behalf.

John has been beheaded. The net is tightening around Jesus. Jesus has already referred to the brutal outcome of his life but Peter has been totally incredulous. This journey up the mountain (Tabor or Hermon) accents again in a dramatic way the truth about Jesus' mission. Moses and Elijah, the two great Jewish liberation leaders, were the great experts on change and development. Moses had led the people into a new land of freedom and well-being; Elijah had transformed the old-fashioned sinful nation into a glorious one. Now surely the disciples' hopes were surely of another great transformation, a totally new world with Rome defeated and Israel free. Moses and Elijah are talking with Jesus about his forthcoming 'Exodus', his passion and death, but Peter doesn't hear that. He is still operating from the old framework the people had clung to. The cloud and the voice affirm Jesus again as the beloved of God, living and acting in the way Abba wants. The challenge is to 'listen to him'; change priorities, trust the new way that is being hewn out for them: not of violence but of justice and love and in friendship with God.

When they descend the mountain, soon events unfold that will reveal the cost of Jesus' being true to Abba's dream.

7. Closing Prayer

God, Father, your way of being with us
is not to dominate, to blame to punish.

Your delight is to be with us
your way is to care for us
to give us joy,
to free us from evil,
to destroy everything that dehumanises
to restore life where it is threatened

Thank you for Jesus who told us:
'Go in peace', 'Enjoy life', 'do not be afraid'.
May your loving energy within us free us
from fear,
lead us to live our lives
so that we know blessings ourselves
and be sources of blessings for others.

May your passion for people and life
burn in us too
so that we may long for a world
where we can all live
in peace and dignity,
and do what we can to let your dream
come true.

Father, friend of life, teach us to
welcome life with hope, trust and love.

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Fresh Dreams for Lent
Third Sunday of Lent 2022

1. Welcome and opening prayer

In bright light and dull darkness
in the energy of each day
and the rest that comes with night,
We remember the goodness of God.

In the heavens high above our heads
in waters that run deep around the world
We remember the goodness of God

In solid land and flowing seas
in vivid flowers and fruit-laden trees
We remember the goodness of God.

In a world filled with animal life
and in ourselves as human beings
We remember the goodness of God.

In rest and reflection
in wonder and worship
We remember the goodness of God.

BMS world mission

2. Gospel text: Luke 13:1-9

Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered; “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, No. But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them - do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent you too will perish. Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. So he said to

the man who took care of the vineyard, “For three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig-tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?” “Sir,” the man replied, “leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilise it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.”

3. Quiet time...

People can read over the story again and pick out a word or short phrase that strikes them and say it out loud. When everyone has had a chance to speak, people can silently listen to what God is saying to them in their hearts linking it with themselves, their community, society or the world. Then some sharing. NB This is not time for argument.

4. Reflection Questions for Luke 13:1-9

As spring flourishes all around us what new growth are you hoping for?

5. Prayers

Mentioning people and situations we want to pray for.

6. Background Notes for Luke 13:1-9

The people asking questions of Jesus had their own agenda, to draw Jesus into confirming that what happened to the people killed was God’s judgement and punishment. He doesn’t answer their question. He counters them with the story of the disappointing fig-tree. The fig-tree has exhausted the soil, absorbed oxygen, used up lots of precious water yet yielded nothing. The owner wants to destroy it. But the man caring for the fig-tree staves off the drastic response. Instead he recommends more patience, forbearance, trust in the capacity of the tree to rehabilitate itself. The story illustrates what the attitude of God towards us really is, not judging, not threatening. Love finds a way. Love believes.

The statement: ‘Unless you repent, you will all perish’ is not to be taken as a threat. We have the choice to make our lives fruitful and happy, life-enhancing, or we can choose to continue to live in a way that is life-destroying.



out what God is really like: not judgemental but unbelievably trusting in people's goodness.

The son's demand is insane, shameful to family. He goes off recklessly with no thought for anyone else. Ending up in dire straits he gets a new angle on what he has abandoned. He wants to be back again with his father, in whatever way is possible.

The elder son is fixed; he doesn't let down his father and he won't lose out or any of the estate due to him but he can't open himself to this new unexpected 'side' of his father. Doesn't know or expects it nor wants it, nor likes it.

The father throws dignity aside and ignores the patriarchal norms of Jewish families; he goes over the top in celebrating. He runs to meet his son, kissing and hugging him, showing unbounded joy because the son has come back, to be close to him again. He sets no conditions, no punishment, no payback.

This is God's attitude to us: not separation but closeness; not loving us because we 'deserve it' or waiting until we 'deserve' it. In God's way of loving 'deserving love' doesn't come into it.

The stand-off of the elder son misses the point. Cuts himself from the celebration. Jesus' challenge is to not to remain stuck in traditional attitudes but to welcome new ways of being and acting, participating in the community of joy, forgiveness, acceptance, believing in everyone's potential that flourishes wherever God is present.

7. Closing Prayer

Lord, Jesus Christ
we thank you for being with us,
for teaching, inspiring and guiding us.
Help us listen to you in the silence of our being
Help us to bring your love and light
out into the world, to whomever we meet
and especially those we have difficulties with.
God, Divine Creator, Mother, Father,
we ask you to bless our world at this time
and we thank you for it.
We pray and thank Mother Earth for her
beauty and nurturance
in the knowledge there would be no life
without her.
We thank all the angels, the saints and our
spiritual helpers
who are always there to help us on our journey.
Thank you, God. Amen



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Fresh Dreams for Lent
Fourth Sunday of Lent 2022

1. Welcome and opening prayer

May the grace of God
shine upon our faces.

May the justice of God challenge us.

May the mercy of God encourage us.

May the courage of God support us in dark
times.

May the power of God keep us humble.

May the humility of God inspire us.

May the generosity of God surprise us.

May the radiance of God dazzle us.

May the faithfulness of God give us hope -
today and always.

The Book of Blessings, p. 137

2. Gospel text: Luke 15:11-32

Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate’. So he divided his property between them.

Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his field to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

When he came to his senses, he said: “How many of father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here am I starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: ‘Father I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer

worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ So he got up and went to his father.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him: ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick, bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger, and sandals on his feet. Bring that fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.

The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father: ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. But you never even gave me a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But

we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’

3. Quiet time...

People can read over the story again and pick out a word or short phrase that strikes them and say it out loud. When everyone has had a chance to speak, people can silently listen to what God is saying to them in their hearts linking it with themselves, their community, society or the world. Then some sharing. NB This is not time for argument.

4. Reflection Questions for Luke 15:11-32

Which of the father’s qualities do you most need:

- His willingness to let his son make mistakes
- his courage in flouting established rules
- His patience in waiting for change
- His capacity to forgive
- His wisdom in dealing with his children
- His ability to celebrate life
- other

5. Prayers

Mentioning people and situations we want to pray for.

6. Background Notes for Luke 15:11-32

The Pharisees bitterly criticised Jesus because he met and chatted with tax collectors and sinners: people whom the Pharisees regarded as cut off from God and despised by God. Jesus has been deliberately making time and space for these ‘sinners.’ And in this story he goes to get lengths to set

7. Closing Prayer

Blessings

May the beauty of God surprise us,
May the presence of God guide us,
May the word of God inspire us,
May the dream of God enfold us,
May the wisdom of God instruct us,
May the call of God invite us,
May the healing of God hold us,
May the wonder of God humble us,
May the love of God renew us,
May the compassion of God strengthen us,
May the forgiveness of God reconcile us,
May the mercy of God bless us,
May the truth of God challenge us,
May we delight in God - with us always.
Amen

Risen Lord,
give us hearts for simple things:
love, laughter, bread and wine and dreams.
Give us a green growing hope,
and make of us a people
whose song is alleluia, whose name is love,
whose sign is peace.

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Fresh Dreams for Lent
Fifth Sunday of Lent 2022

1. Welcome and opening prayer

Father, we praise you and we bless you.
You do not hide from us, you are not distant.
You have revealed yourself and your great love for us in everything you have made.

We see you in the strength of mountains,
the solitude of deserts,
and in gentle, refreshing rain.
We see you in the height of skies
and ocean depths,
in birds that soar and fish that swim.

We see you in the hope of sunrise
in the relief and rest of sunset,
in the plants that burst to life around us
this blessed season.
In the smile and greeting of a neighbour,
in the love of family and friends,
in the support of our local communities
we trace your love and recognise your care.

But our joy is tinged with sorrow
because people groan under the burden of oppression

We pray that you will guide us to be ministers of change,
to be yeast in a world that needs lifting,
to shine in compassionate service that echoes your way
and to never forget that hope always breaks through
the cracks of our broken world.

2. Gospel text: John 8:1-11

At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the

Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus: “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They were using the question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her: “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

“No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,.” Jesus declared, “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

3. Quiet time...

People can read over the story again and pick out a word or short phrase that strikes them and say it out loud. When everyone has had a chance to speak, people can silently listen to what God is saying to them in their hearts linking it with themselves, their community, society or the world. Then some sharing. NB This is not time for argument.

4. Reflection Questions for

John 8:1-11

Easter symbolises new life, new energy, new possibilities of living and loving..
What dream do you have for Easter 2022?

5. Prayers

Mentioning people and situations we want to pray for.

6. Background Notes for

John 8:1-11

The Pharisees and teachers of the law circle her in the Temple, in full view of everyone. Very sure of themselves - they have the whole weight of the Law of Moses behind them. Mob justice will quickly be done. The woman is shamed, terrified, a few minutes from death.

Jesus does not stand up to meet them . He chooses not to be engaged on their terms but remains stooped, scribbling on the ground. (Scholars disagree about the significance of what he is doing). As they persist with their questioning he stands up to turn the tables on them. The woman is no more to blame than the man they found her with. As they slink away the men have judged themselves. He then engages the woman in judging the situation and assessing the outcome. She is free to go. But she doesn't run. She stays and Jesus talks to her in full public view, eye to eye, heart to heart. He sees deeper into the life-giving truth within her. There is no judgement, only belief in her ability to turn things around and love more responsibly, go away with dignity.

