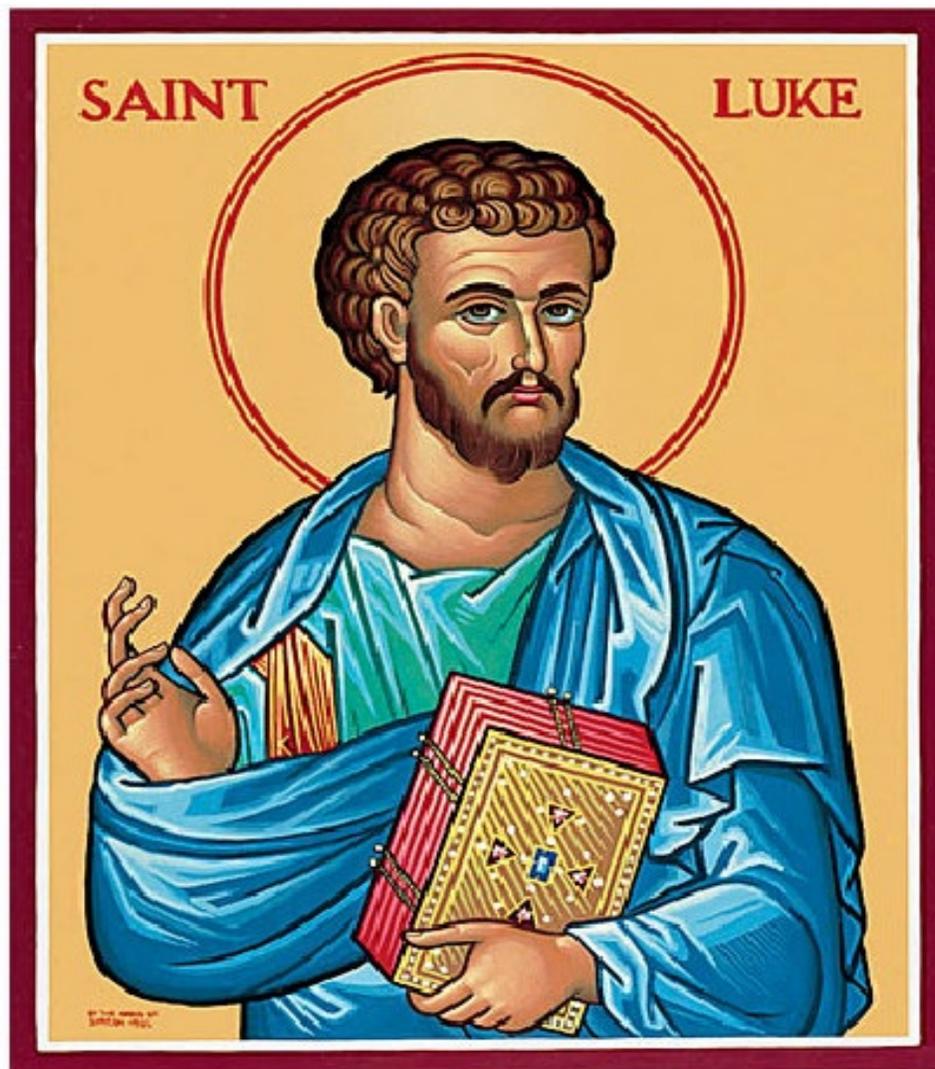


*Through Lent
with
Saint Luke*



Daily Readings in Saint Luke's Gospel

*With notes by
Fr Peter Down*



Five Crosses

Fintinshull, Chilthorne Down,
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Luton

Foreword

Reading through a complete gospel is not something that we do very often (perhaps not often enough). The gospels though are stories and deserve to be seen as a whole and each of them has its own flavour. In our minds the gospel blend into one as if there were no differences between them. This Lent you have the opportunity to read through the whole of Luke's gospel, to get into the mind of Luke, to understand what Luke's unique message about Jesus was and to immerse yourself in the story that Luke was telling.

Luke was a physician, a Greek, perhaps a Hellenic Jew. He was a companion of Paul and is mentioned by Paul in his letters (Colossians 4.14; 2 Timothy 4.11; Philemon 24). Luke himself in his second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, uses the first person *we* in describing some of the journeys of Paul, presenting himself as an eye witness and as a companion of Paul (Acts 16.10-18; 20.4-21.19; 27.1-28.30). According to legend Luke was also an artist and is said to have painted a portrait of Mary, the mother of Jesus although there is no evidence to support this view.

February 10th, Ash Wednesday

Luke 1.1-25 (or short reading, Luke 1.11-20)

Luke begins with the dedication of his book to Theophilus. We do not know who Theophilus was and the name may be a pseudonym. The dedication is typical of the time in Greek writing. The story begins immediately with the promise to Zechariah that his wife, Elizabeth will bear him a son, John the Baptist, even though they are *getting on in years*.

Prayer

Bless these days with your Word. Let your Light shine in the darkness. Help me long for that Light until we celebrate it at the Vigil six weeks from now. And most of all Lord, help me to honour this day with the ashes on my forehead. They help me remember where I have come from and where I am going. May I acknowledge to you my sins and my deep need for your loving forgiveness and grace. I pray that this Lenten season will make me so much more aware of how much I need your healing in my life.

February 11th

Luke 1.26-56 (or short reading, Luke 1.26-38)

And now Luke begins the story of Jesus himself. Like John's birth the birth of Jesus is the work of God rather than of natural processes. Mary questions how this might come about and is told that the child will be the result of the work of the Holy Spirit and that he *will be holy and will be called the Son of God*.

Luke weaves his two birth narratives together in the story of the Mary's visit to Elizabeth. Elizabeth's child leaps in her womb as John is portrayed beginning his witness to Jesus even before his birth. Mary sings her song in response to the words of Elizabeth. In the song, which we know as the *Magnificat*, Luke sets out a key theme of his gospel – God's favour shown to the poor and powerless.

Prayer

Lord, let everything I do this day and in this season of Lent come from you, be inspired by you. I long to be closer to you. Help me to remember that nothing is important in my life unless it glorifies you in some way. Heal me, Lord, and help me to find you in the darkness of my life. Let me reach out in this darkness and feel your hand and love there to guide me.

February 12th

Luke 1.57-80 (or short reading, Luke 1.57-66)

The birth of John is recorded. Elizabeth is insistent that he should be named John, rather than Zechariah after his father. This happens when Zechariah is consulted. He receives back his

power of speech and sings the song we know as the *Benedictus*. In it he speaks of God's faithfulness to his promises and of John's work as the forerunner of the Messiah.

Prayer

Lord, I know how much you love me. It's hard for me to feel it sometimes, but I know your love is always with me. Help me to use your love as a way to persevere in my Lenten intentions. I am weak, but I know with your help, I can use these small sacrifices in my life to draw closer to you.

February 13th

Luke 2.1-21 (or short reading, Luke 2.1-14)

The birth of Jesus is recounted. The story is complex, beginning with reference to a census which requires Joseph to take Mary, who is near to the time of Jesus's birth, to travel to Bethlehem, the city of his ancestors. The child is born and laid in a manger because *there was no room for them in the living space*. (The Greek here usually translated *inn*, is more commonly translated *guest room*). Angels appear to shepherds and tell them of the birth. The shepherds come to see what has occurred and tell Mary and Joseph what they have heard and seen. Luke clearly wants us to understand that the baby in the manger is no ordinary child.

Prayer

Loving creator, I am not asking to overcome my weakness, but to use it in some way to glorify you. Let me be aware of the many ways you reach out to help me today and let me stand in awe of the power that you use in such loving ways.

February 14th, The First Sunday in Lent

Luke 2.22-40 (or short reading, Luke 2.25-35)

Jesus's parents take him to the Temple for Mary's purification following childbirth. There Simeon prophesies about the child. He is destined to be opposed, and Mary is told that a sword will pierce her soul, presumably metaphorically. Anna too prophesies concerning the child. These events are intended to emphasise the significance of this birth. This story concludes the birth narrative of Jesus in Luke's gospel, as we are told that Jesus *grew to maturity, he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him*.

Prayer

Lord God, you who breathed the spirit of life within me. Draw out of me the light and life you created. Help me to find my way back to you. Help me to use my life to reflect your glory and to serve others as your son Jesus did.

February 15th

Luke 2.41-52 (or short reading, Luke 2.41-50)

This is the only story of Jesus's childhood. He travels with his family to Jerusalem and remains behind debating with the scholars in the temple. The astonishment at his wisdom is another way in which Luke demonstrates the remarkable nature of who Jesus is. For Luke, Jesus is preparing from birth for his ministry, but he is also undoubtedly God's Son. His divinity is clearly demonstrated throughout his life.

Prayer

Loving God, you call us back to you with all of our hearts. I feel your call for me deep in my heart and I know you want me back as much as I want to return. Please, Lord, give me the wisdom to know how to return. Make my journey back to you this Lent one of grace, forgiveness and gentle love.

February 16th

Luke 3.1-20 (or short reading, Luke 3.1-9)

Luke returns now to the story of John. Although John will be mentioned later this is Luke's conclusion of his story. He tells of how he was inspired to go out into the wilderness to proclaim a *baptism of repentance*; he outlines the content of his preaching and the way in which he gives practical advice to those who ask about how to live an acceptable and righteous life. Finally, Luke tells how Herod had John arrested and thrown into prison, but Luke does not tell the story of his beheading (although he will make reference to it later, Lk 9.9).

Prayer

Loving God, you call us back to you with all of our hearts. I feel your call for me deep in my heart and I know you want me back as much as I want to return. Please, Lord, give me the wisdom to know how to return. Make my journey back to you this Lent one of grace, forgiveness and gentle love.

February 17th

Luke 3.21-38 (or short reading, Luke 3.21-22)

Luke's version of the baptism of Jesus is brief, just two verses and hardly refers to John at all. This is very much the beginning of the story of the adult Jesus and of his ministry. The voice from heaven is heard but early versions of the text vary from what we see in Matthew and Mark, *you are my Son, the beloved; in you I am well pleased*, or *you are my Son, today I have fathered you*.

The account of the baptism is followed by a genealogy which establishes Jesus as a descendant of David, and of Adam, through Joseph's line. You could argue though that the genealogy is rendered meaningless by Luke's comment *Jesus being the son, as it was thought, of Joseph*. The point of this list is to show that Jesus is the son of David, to justify his Messianic claim and the son of Adam to assert his full humanity.

Prayer

Dear Lord, I know you receive what is in my heart. Let me be inspired by your words and by the actions of your son, Jesus. Guide me to make sacrifices this Lent in the spirit of self-denial and with greater attention to you and to those around me. Help me to believe that you will grant me this because of the sacrifice Jesus made for me.

February 18th

Luke 4.1-13

Having been anointed with the Holy Spirit Jesus now is led into the wilderness where he is subject to temptation by the devil. The responses that Jesus makes to the temptations reveal that the nature of what he rejects is reliance upon himself and his own resources rather than putting all his trust in God. For Luke this reveals that throughout his ministry the strength that Jesus has is God given, and it is through God's power alone that he is able to achieve what God has called him to do.

Prayer

Lord, I'm not always eager to do your will. I'd often much rather do my own will. Please be with me on this Lenten journey and help me to remember that your own spirit can guide me in the right direction. With a grateful heart, I acknowledge your love and know that without you, I can do nothing.

February 19th

Luke 4.14-30 (or short reading, Luke 4.16-24)

Again led by the Spirit Jesus returns to his home town of Nazareth and is invited to read from the prophet Isaiah. He tells the congregation that he is the fulfilment of the prophecy he has just read. They are puzzled by this, but it is what follows that really angers them, *in truth I tell you, no prophet is ever accepted in his own country*. What follows reveals that he is speaking not just about his home town but about Israel. His ministry will be to Gentiles too. This is too much but he slips away as they are trying to do away with him.

Prayer

Creator of my Life, renew me: bring me to new life in you. Touch me and make me feel whole

again. Help me to see your love in the passion, death and resurrection of your son. Help me to observe Lent in a way that allows me to celebrate that love. Prepare me for these weeks of Lent as I feel both deep sorrow for my sins and your undying love for me.

February 20th

Luke 4.31-44 (or short reading, Luke 4.31-37)

The story that follows offers a complete contrast to the events in Nazareth. Jesus, in Capernaum, makes an impression on the people because his word carried authority. Here he drives out devils and heals the sick and the people try to persuade Jesus to stay with them. But Jesus moves on because he *must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns too*.

Prayer

Loving God, Sometimes my heart turns in every direction except towards you. Please help me to turn my heart toward you, to gaze upon you in trust and to seek your kingdom with all of my heart. Soften my hardened heart so that I might love others as a way to glorify and worship you. Grant me this with the ever-present guidance of your spirit.

February 21st, The Second Sunday in Lent

Luke 5.1-11

Luke tells us quite a lot in this short story. First, we see that Jesus's popularity and fame is growing – the crowds force him to the edge of the lake and he steps into a boat to get away for a time. Then we hear this story of a wonderful catch of fish, so much that the fishermen are astounded at the size of it. Peter's response throughout the story is one of faith. First,, he trusts Jesus's instruction to cast the nets in spite of his fisherman's knowledge. Second, he sees in the great catch the work of God in the person of Jesus and responds, *Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man*. As a result of all this Jesus acquires his first disciples, Peter, James and John. This story is Luke's version of the calling of these first disciples and has obvious differences to the stories in the other gospels.

Prayer

Loving God, there is so much darkness in my life and I hide from you. Take my hand and lead me out of the shadows of my fear. Help me to change my heart. Bring me to your truth and help me to respond to your generous love. Let me recognize the fullness of your love which will fill my life. Free me from the darkness in my heart.

February 22nd

Luke 5.12-26 (or short reading, Luke 5.17-26)

The stories that follow continue to emphasise the growing fame and popularity of Jesus. The story of the cleansing of the man with a skin disease concludes with Jesus telling him to tell no one but, in spite of this, the crowds continue to grow as people come to Jesus for healing. Luke then tells us that Jesus *would go off to some deserted place and pray*. Jesus needs time away to pray and be one with God. The story of the paralysed man who is lowered by his companions through the roof is further evidence of the great following that Jesus has attracted. But the story also introduces a theme which will recur frequently – disputes with the Pharisees. Here the dispute centres around who may forgive sins and whether Jesus acts blasphemously in saying, *your sins are forgiven*.

Prayer

Lord, your commandment of love is so simple and so challenging. Help me to let go of my pride, to be humble in my penance. I want only to live the way you ask me to love, to love the way you ask me to live. I ask this through your son, Jesus, who stands at my side today and always.

February 23rd

Luke 5.27-39 (or short reading, Luke 5.27-32)

The story of the calling of Levi (often identified with Matthew in the other gospels) introduces another new theme. Jesus mixes with the socially unacceptable. Levi, as a tax collector is excluded from Jewish society because of his collaboration with the Roman occupiers. He is criticised by the Pharisees and scribes but responds that his ministry is to call sinners to repentance, but there is also an implication that those on the margins of society are more ready to hear Jesus's message than those at the heart of it. Luke also creates the sense of Jesus's ministry at this point being exciting and lively. His disciples are criticised for their lack of religious discipline, but Jesus argues that now is not the time for fasting and praying (That time will come later) but for rejoicing and working. And at the end of this chapter Luke introduces his first parable which would seem to suggest that Jesus's message is for the likes of Levi rather than for the Pharisees and scribes and those who think themselves righteous,.

Prayer

God in heaven and in my life, guide me and protect me. I so often believe I can save myself and I always end in failure. Lead me with your love away from harm and guide me on the right path. May your Spirit inspire the Church and make us an instrument of your love and guidance. Thank you for your care for me.

February 24th

Luke 6.1-16 (or short reading, Luke 6.1-5)

Luke now introduces another area of dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees – the Sabbath. In saying that *the Son of Man is master of the Sabbath* Jesus is laying down a challenge to the religious people to reflect on what the Sabbath is for, and setting himself against them. Luke also foreshadows the passion as the Pharisees *discuss the best way of dealing with Jesus*. Again Jesus retires to pray and then selects twelve of his disciples to be his apostles. Apostle means *one who is sent*. Luke's list of the twelve differs from other lists in the gospels, although the key players remain the same.

Prayer

God of Love, through this Lenten journey, purify my desires to serve you. Free me from any temptations to judge others, to place myself above others. Please let me surrender even my impatience with others, that with your love and your grace, I might be less and less absorbed with myself and more and more full of the desire to follow you, in laying down my life according to your example.

February 25th

Luke 6.17-49 (or short reading, Luke 6.20-26)

Where Matthew has the Sermon on the Mount Luke has here the Sermon on the Plain which contains much of Matthew's content, but he spreads much of it elsewhere in his gospel. Here we have the Beatitudes which are similar but not at all identical to those in Matthew's gospel. Luke's Beatitudes are balanced by matching curses, *Blessed are you who are poor ... But alas for you who are rich*. The moral teaching which follows is similar to Matthew's but briefer. The parable of the houses built on the rock and sand round off the Sermon on the Plain and reinforce the idea that Jesus requires his followers to live lives which contrast with the ways of the world.

Prayer

Loving God, I hear your invitation, "Come back to me" and I am filled with such a longing to return to you. Show me the way to return. Lead me this day in good works I do in your name and send your Spirit to guide me and strengthen my faith. I ask only to feel your love in my life today.

February 26th

Luke 7.1-35 (or short reading, Luke 7.1-10)

There are a number of themes in this passage which are found frequently in Luke's gospel. First, his acknowledgement of faith in those who come to him, especially in those who might not normally be expected to have faith, in this case a centurion whose servant he heals. Then we see Jesus's compassion for the marginalised. He feels sorrow for the widow whose son has died.

As the word spread about all that Jesus was doing John sent his disciples with a vital question about whether or not Jesus is the Messiah. The answer allows John to decide for himself, a key theme in all four gospels.

This is followed by a discussion of who John was, in which Jesus also stokes the fires of the debate with the Pharisees.

Prayer

Loving God, Caring parent, I am a child who so often turns my back on your love. Please accept my small acts of sorrow today and help to release me from the self-absorption that closes my heart to you. As I journey through Lent, let me remember the feast you have prepared for me in the resurrection and let me be filled with thanks to you.

February 27th

Luke 7.36-50

Again we see Jesus's compassion for the marginalised. The woman who brings the ointment has no secure place in society. Simon, the Pharisee, can see only a sinner, Jesus sees a person in need of love and forgiveness. The parable reveals that being forgiven can transform a life in ways that being righteous cannot. Again we see faith commended by Jesus, *your faith has saved you; go in peace.*

Prayer

God of infinite love, you shower me with limitless gifts in my life. In my every thought and action today guide me to the bright and loving light of your kingdom. Help me to be aware of the many ways you allow me to share in your life so intimately today. Thank you for the gifts you have placed in my life. Let me be grateful every moment of this day.

February 28th, Third Sunday in Lent

Luke 8.1-21 (or short reading, Luke 8.16-18)

It is typical of Luke that he should make a point of mentioning the women who were numbered among Jesus's disciples. The other gospels mention only Mary of Magdala of this list in Luke. The parable of the sower brings with it an explanation of why Jesus speaks in parables – only those who are ready to hear the word will understand. This is followed by the parable of the light. What is the point of lighting a lamp if it is covered? This passage ends with the rejection by Jesus of his family. At this stage in his life his ministry is his exclusive focus; he will not be distracted.

Prayer

Loving Father, So many times I turn away from you and always you welcome me back. Your

mercy and love gives me confidence. Thank you for the invitation to share, fast and pray so that you can form a new heart within me. Your powerful compassion for my weaknesses leads me to ask for mercy and await with great hope the Easter joy you share with us.

February 29th

Luke 8.22-56 (or short reading, Luke 8.40-56)

This series of stories reveal more about Jesus. The stilling of the storm reveals Jesus's authority. His questioning of the disciples faith is in contrast to the commendation of the faith of the centurion and the woman with the ointment that we noted earlier. Jesus requires faith of his followers. The story of the Gerasene demoniac makes the modern reader feel uncomfortable but the point of the story is surely that Jesus has authority over, not only the physical world, but also the spirit world.

This followed by two healing miracles woven into a single story. The woman's faith is praised and the doubting crowd at the synagogue official's house are encouraged to have faith. Once again we hear Jesus requiring those he heals to tell no one.

Prayer

Merciful God, Free your Church from the sins of this world and protect us from evil we see and the evil we prefer to ignore. We need your guidance, Lord for we cannot do this alone. Only with your help can we be saved. Thank you for your desire to save us and love us.

March 1st

Luke 9.1-27 (or short reading, Luke 9.1-6)

Jesus sends his disciples out with the instruction not to waste time on those who are not ready for their message. The story is interrupted by Luke noting the anxiety of Herod that Jesus might be John returned from the dead (Luke's only reference to the death of John). This is followed by Jesus withdrawing once again, this time with his disciples.

The feeding of the crowd with loaves and fish is followed by another mention of whether Jesus is John returned from the dead, this time in response to Jesus's question, *Who do people say I am?* But the purpose this time is to establish clearly that Jesus is *not* John the Baptist but something more wonderful and significant, when Peter replies, *the Christ of God*. Again the disciples are told to tell no one.

Jesus now prophesies his own death for the first time, but also predicts the suffering of his followers and requires them, like him, to *take up their cross*.

Prayer

God of infinite love, I thank you for this reminder of your love and your call that we be more patient, gentle and compassionate with others. Here in the middle of Lent, I turn to you to beg for your help. Please soften my heart. Help me to let go of judging others. I ask you this, in

Jesus' name.

March 2nd

Luke 9.28-62 (or short reading, Luke 9.28-36)

It is no coincidence that the story of the Transfiguration immediately follows the prophecy of the passion. Jesus's glory is revealed just as he accepts his destiny. The revelation of his glory is followed by another story of demonic possession – the response of the powers of hell? Again faith is required, Faithless and perverse generation! Jesus alone has the faith required to overcome the demon.

The disciples argue about who is the greatest in another challenge to Jesus's mission and learn that the least among them is the greatest. And then they debate whether Jesus's name is the exclusive preserve of his followers. Jesus responds by saying that, *anyone who is not against you is for you*. The final stories of the lack of response of the Samaritan village and the excuses made by those invited to join Jesus finish this cycle of stories which establishes the priorities of the mission from here on – the focus is all to be on the proclamation of the kingdom.

Prayer

God, you love me as your own child. May I bend my life and will toward you so that I might accept your teaching and guidance. I am so grateful for your support in my life, now and in the eternal life you are preparing for me. I beg for your help and Spirit in my life today.

March 3rd

Luke 10.1-42 (or short reading, Luke 10.1-16)

Jesus now sends out seventy-two disciples. The instructions are the same and the outcome similar too. The disciples are encouraged to rejoice that they are living in those days when God's deliverance is revealed.

This is followed by another debate between Jesus and a lawyer about how to inherit eternal life which leads to Jesus telling the parable of the good Samaritan. The chapter concludes with Mary commended for choosing the role of listening at the feet of Jesus instead of busying herself with the details of daily life. The times require total focus on Jesus and the kingdom.

Prayer

Loving God, I hear your invitation, "Come back to me" and I am filled with such a longing to return to you. Show me the way to return. Lead me this day in good works I do in your name and send your Spirit to guide me and strengthen my faith. I ask only to feel your love in my life today.

March 4th

Luke 11.1-32 (or short reading, Luke 11.1-8)

This is Luke's version of the Lord's prayer. It is clearly different from Matthew's and is given a different context. Here the disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray as John taught his disciples, making this another occasion when John and Jesus are compared. Jesus obliges them and gives them this briefer version of what we know as the Lord's Prayer. It is followed by more teaching on prayer, which is probably also an answer to the disciples' request. Jesus's advice seems to be – be persistent and believe that God will do what is best for you. This is followed by a debate about Jesus's authority to cast out devils. This is followed by a warning about Judgement Day.

Prayer

God of Mercy, I feel my heart overflowing with your tenderness. I sense your loving touch deep within my soul. I ask for your help in my weakness that I might be faithful to your word and I am so grateful that your mercy for my failings is as strong as your unbounded love for me.

March 5th

Luke 11.33-54 (or short reading, Luke 11.37-54)

Jesus now talks about what true righteousness is. Accused of not washing before eating Jesus speaks of slavish observance of the minutiae of the Law compared a seeking after justice and love. This, of course, provokes a response from the lawyers and the Pharisees. From here the division between Jesus and the religious leaders intensifies.

Prayer

God of Mercy and Understanding, I know that with help I can open my heart more fully to the mysteries of the suffering and death of your son. Help me to be humble in this journey and remember that any mercy and compassion I feel is a gift from you. I await the joy of Easter with new longing and patience.

March 6th, The Fourth Sunday in Lent

Luke 12.1-40 (or short reading, Luke 12.22-32)

We hear some of Jesus's teaching here. It first picks up on the dispute in chapter 11 with the Pharisees as Jesus advises his disciples not to be like them. Jesus then encourages his disciples to be courageous, *do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more*, rather they should fear the coming judgement. They should trust in God who cares for each one of them, and believe that the Holy Spirit will give them the ability to witness even in hostile situations.

He then tells parables which show that they should be concerned only for the kingdom

because God will provide for their daily needs.

Prayer

Loving Creator of mine, I feel the pace quicken, the time draw near. I am filled with joy as I move toward Easter and the promised reconciliation with you. Teach me to follow the example of your Son, to be worthy of being called one his people: a Christian. Help me to live each day as he did turning hatred to love and conflict to peace. I await the new life with eagerness, faith and a deep gratitude.

March 7th

Luke 12.41-59 (or short reading, Luke 12.54-59)

Jesus now warns his disciples to be ready for the coming Day of Judgement. This will be a time of divisiveness as families are set against each other and friends find themselves on different sides. There will be those who will be saved and others who will be condemned.

Prayer

God who created me, You offer me new life through your Son and through the gift of your sacraments. While I see new life all around me, I don't always recognize the new life you offer me. Help me to grow this Lent in an awareness of the gifts you place in my life and in a greater appreciation for your care. Give me the courage to ask for help.

March 8th

Luke 13.1-35 (or short reading, Luke 13.18-21)

This chapter begins with teaching about sin and judgement. Jesus teaches that people do not suffer because they sin, nor are those who do not suffer more righteous. All need to repent. Then he tells a parable showing how God is merciful and gives sinners time to repent. The healing of the crippled woman is a prelude to a debate with the religious leaders about the Sabbath. He turns the accusations back on his accusers – why is breaking the Sabbath to water one's animals acceptable but freeing a woman of her affliction wrong? In contrast Jesus asks what the kingdom is like and he tells two parables showing how remarkable the growth of the kingdom is. This is followed by teaching about how hard it is to get into the kingdom, reinforcing teaching we have seen before about how important it is to be focussed on the kingdom. The chapter ends with word of a threat from Herod which is followed by more predictions of the death of Jesus and how he must die in Jerusalem.

Prayer

Joyful praise in Lent? I'm not sure I always feel that. I ask you to help me prepare to

understand and embrace the paschal mystery in my life. I don't always see the beauty and mystery of this season and often I run from the pain. Help me to see how your saving grace and your loving touch in my life can fill me with joyful praise of the salvation you have sent to me.

March 9th

Luke 14.1-35 (or short reading, Luke 14.7-14)

Jesus shares a meal in the house of a Pharisee. Again there is a debate about the Sabbath, very similar to the debate in the previous chapter. Jesus goes on and tells parables which use feasts and meals as their theme to show that to enter the kingdom requires us to be humble and to expect no reward.

After this Jesus reinforces his teaching that his disciples should be single-minded in their discipleship, turning their backs on their old lives and accepting the cross and suffering. Those who fail will be rejected like salt that has lost its flavour.

Prayer

Loving and merciful God, I am so aware of my sins and weaknesses. But as painfully aware of my faults as I am, Let me also remember your tender love, your gentle and limitless forgiveness. I come before you filled with pain and guilt but look into your eyes and see the forgiving love I so long for in my life. Help me to forgive the same way. Teach me to love as you love.

March 10th

Luke 15.1-32 (or short reading, Luke 15.4-10)

The Pharisees complain that Jesus mixes with sinners. His response is to tell three parables about how God seeks out the lost to restore them – the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost (or prodigal) son. The first two are finished with a comment on the joy in heaven over those who repent.

Prayer

Merciful Father, Loving Mother, I know that the tiny sacrifices I make this Lent can never serve as a real penance in my life. 1 But help me to make my whole life one of following your Son. I am filled with your love. Let your love shine out from within me and guide my life in this sacred journey toward the Easter joy you offer me.

March 11th

Luke 16.1-31 (or short reading, Luke 16.9-15)

The parable of the dishonest steward is difficult. In the context of other teaching about how to get into the kingdom Jesus is, perhaps, suggesting that, just as the self interest of the steward was served by making his master's debtors indebted to him, so we will be wise to ensure that we are found worthy to enter the kingdom. Luke also interprets it as yet another attack upon the integrity of the Pharisees.

The parable of Lazarus and the rich man shows that how we live in this world will determine our place in the next.

Prayer

Loving God of forgiveness, I come before you humbled and sad in the face of my own repeated failings. I hold out my hands as a petitioner would, asking for mercy. It is then that I feel you reach out and take my hand in your loving grasp. Thank you for the love you pour out on me so lavishly. Help me to follow more closely in the path you have set for me, the path of your Son.

March 12th

Luke 17.1-19 (or short reading, Luke 17.1-6)

Here we hear Jesus's teaching on the need for repentance and forgiveness which is followed by more teaching on faith and the need to expect no reward.

Of the ten lepers who are healed only one returns to thank Jesus. Interestingly, he is the only one who has not gone to the priests. His faith is commended by Jesus (as often in Luke's gospel) and perhaps he is the only one who has gone to the right place after all.

Prayer

Lord, what you ask of my life seems so right. It is how I want to live, following your Son, Jesus, so closely. And yet I fail so often to stay on that path. I cannot do it alone, loving Lord. I need your help and guidance. I need to remember your love for me and I want to remember how very much I need you in my life.

March 13th, The Fifth Sunday in Lent

Luke 17.20-37 (or short reading, Luke 17.20-25)

Here Luke introduces a new theme to his gospel – the suddenness of the coming of the kingdom. Here *Jesus* seems to be looking beyond his death to the day of the Son of Man. There will be a time of judgement which will suddenly and unexpectedly; its coming cannot be predicted.

Prayer

My loving Lord, it's so hard to love the world sometimes and to love it the way Jesus did

seems impossible. Help me to be inspired by his love and guided by his example. Most of all, I want to accept that I can't do it alone, and that trying is an arrogance of self-centredness. I need you, dear God, to give me support in this journey. Show me how to unlock my heart so that I am less selfish. Let me be less fearful of the pain and darkness that will be transformed by you into Easter joy.

March 14th

Luke 18.1-17 (or short reading, Luke 18.9-14)

Here are two parables about prayer (Luke has more about prayer than either Matthew or Mark). The message about persistence in prayer recalls Jesus's teaching in Lk 11.5-8. If even an unjust judge can be persuaded to do what is right how much more will God do right by those who come to him? The message in the second parable also reminds of Jesus's teaching earlier in Lk 14.11, *for everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, but anyone who humbles himself will be raised up.*

Prayer

God of love, I know that you are the source of all that is good and graced in my life. Help me to move from the life of sin to which I so often cling, into the new life of grace you offer me. You know what I need to prepare for your kingdom. Bless me with those gifts.

March 15th

Luke 18.18-43 (or short reading, Luke 18.24-30)

It will be hard for the rich to enter the kingdom. Their attachment to their wealth is what holds them back. Simply keeping the Law is not enough, we must also put God and the kingdom first. The rewards of the kingdom are better than wealth in this life.

Jesus now begins his journey to Jerusalem. The disciples cannot yet understand that Jesus must suffer and die.

The healing of the blind man seems to be a return to all that came earlier but it is, in a sense a completion of Jesus's Galilean ministry. He again commends the man for his faith. It is, though, the last healing miracle in Luke's gospel. The emphasis now changes as Jesus approaches Jerusalem.

Prayer

Loving God, You have heard my complaints, my impatience. Sometimes I become frightened when I move away from you. Guide my heart back to you. Help me to think beyond my own wants and to desire only to do you will. Thank you for the many blessings in my life and for the ways I feel your presence.

March 16th

Luke 19.1-27 (or short reading, Luke 19.1-10)

Jesus is now on his journey to Jerusalem. When he reaches Jericho he meets Zacchaeus and again Jesus is criticised for keeping company with sinners, but here it is Zacchaeus who, by his actions, shows that Jesus has come to bring salvation to sinners, which Jesus then confirms. The time for debating with the Pharisees is over for now.

He tells this parable which seems to have two points. The use that his servants make of his money, and the outcome of opposing those in authority (perhaps foreshadowing his own death).

Prayer

Loving Creator, I know in your great love for me, you see the deep sorrow in my heart. Hear my prayers which are offered with such trust in you. Be with me in both mind and heart as I renew my life in your spirit.

March 17th

Luke 19.28-48 (or short reading, Luke 19.28-38)

Jesus goes up to Jerusalem and enters the city on a colt. The crowds welcome him as *he who is coming as King in the name of the Lord!* The words that the crowd cry out are from Psalm 118 and appear to be words for greeting the king. They are a snub to the leaders of the nation. Jesus further challenges their authority by entering the temple compound and ejecting the traders.

Prayer

Lord, all I want is to be faithful to you in my life, but so often I fail. Free me from my many sins and guide me to the life I will share with you. I wait for your promise to be fulfilled with great hope in my heart and your praise on my lips.

March 18th

Luke 20.1-26 (or short reading, Luke 20.1-8)

Now the debate with the religious leaders resumes and will be decisive. First there is the question of the source of Jesus's authority. Jesus's refusal to tell them is a rejection of their authority. The parable that follows accuses the religious leaders of self interest and god will act to remove them. The discussion of the tribute money is an accusation that the leaders are unfaithful in their service of God.

Prayer

Most forgiving Lord, again and again you welcome me back into your loving arms. Grant me freedom from the heavy burdens of sin that weigh me down and keep me so far from you.

March 19th

Luke 20.27-47 (or short reading, Luke 20.41-47)

More debating follows, first about the nature of the resurrection with the Sadducees, in which Jesus claims his faithfulness to the God of the ancestors is greater than theirs. Then he makes claims for himself being greater than David which are guaranteed to enrage the religious authorities. Jesus rounds this off by insulting the integrity of the scribes.

Prayer

Loving God, Your eternal watchfulness keeps me safe from harm. I am filled with a great happiness when I feel your endless love for me. Thank you for your care for me, one of your children. I ask you to protect from harm those who will soon be your children, joined in the joy of your church. Please continue to pour out your blessings on all of us who have been given the life giving waters of baptism.

March 20th, Palm Sunday

Luke 21.1-38 (or short reading, Luke 21.8-19)

The story of the widow's mite contrasts the outward show of the religious people with the inner faith of the poorest in society. The widow's offering is acceptable because of its costliness to her, not because of its value to the temple treasury. Then, by predicting the destruction of the temple, Jesus again subtly condemns the outward show of religion, and this leads into a prophecy of the end time. His life and death will herald upheaval in the world and ultimately vindication for him and his faithful disciples when, *they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*

Prayer

Loving God, I am just beginning to realize how much you love me. Your son, Jesus was humble and obedient. He fulfilled your will for him by becoming human and suffering with us. I ask you for the desire to become more humble so that my own life might also bear witness to you. I want to use the small sufferings I have in this world to give you glory. Please, Lord, guide my mind with your truth. Strengthen my life by the example of Jesus. Help me to be with Jesus in this week as he demonstrates again his total love for me. He died so that I would no longer be separated from you. Help me to feel how close you are and to live in union with you.

March 21st

Luke 22.1-23 (or short reading, Luke 22.14-20)

Jesus and his disciples share a last Passover meal. At the meal Jesus takes bread and wine and shares them with his disciples. Luke's story of this event is more complex than in the other gospels. Alongside this is the story of Jesus's betrayal. Judas resolves to betray Jesus and Jesus prophesies his betrayal at the supper.

Prayer

God of love, My prayer is simple: Your son, Jesus, suffered and died for me. I know only that I cannot have real strength unless I rely on you. I cannot feel protected from my many weaknesses until I turn to you for forgiveness and your unalterable love. Help me to share this strength, protection and love with others.

March 22nd

Luke 22.24-46 (or short reading, Luke 22.31-34)

The rest of the meal also reflects badly on the other disciples. They squabble about who is the greatest, They will be tested and Peter will deny Jesus. The disciples begin to fall away even as Jesus is praying in the garden. If they cannot remain awake now, how will they stand with Jesus at his death? Jesus is alone now.

Prayer

God of such unwavering love, how do I "celebrate" the passion and death of Jesus? I often want to look the other way and not watch, not stay with Jesus in his suffering. Give me the strength to see his love with honesty and compassion and to feel deeply your own forgiveness and mercy for me. Help me to understand how to "celebrate" this week. I want be able to bring my weaknesses and imperfections with me as I journey with Jesus this week, so aware of his love.

March 23rd

Luke 22.47-71 (or short reading, Luke 22.47-53)

Judas brings the guard to arrest Jesus. The trials of Jesus begin, first at the high priest's house where Peter does indeed deny Jesus. Jesus continues to antagonise the leaders and, in their eyes at least, condemns himself.

Prayer

My saviour, do you invite me to share in the glory of the resurrection? Please stay with me as I struggle to see how accepting the crosses of my life will free me from the power of the one who wants only to destroy my love and trust in you. Help me to be humble and accepting like

your son, Jesus. I want to turn to you with the same trust he had in your love. Save me, Lord. Only you can save me.

March 24th, Maundy Thursday

Luke 23.1-12 (or short reading, Luke 23.42-7)

Jesus is brought before Pilate, who, finding him to be a Galilean, sends him to Herod, who mocks him and sends him back. The disciples having abandoned Jesus it seems now as if the authorities want nothing to do with either.

Prayer

Loving Provider, you gather me in this upper room with your son, to be fed by your love. At that supper, Jesus told us to "love one another" and I know that is the heart of his gift, his sacrifice for me. I ask that I might find the source of my own heart, the meaning for my own life, in that Eucharist. Guide me to the fullness of your love and life.

March 25th, Good Friday

Luke 23.13-32 (or short reading, Luke 23.13-25)

Standing again before Pilate the stakes are raised for Jesus. The crowd are incited to demand his death and Pilate gives in to their demands and Jesus is led out to his crucifixion with two bandits, one on either side of him.

Prayer

My Lord, your son has suffered so much, shed so much blood. I was born with so many faults and my nature is so full of weakness, and yet your son Jesus has died on the cross. For me. I know your grace has the power to cleanse me of my many sins and to make me more like your Son. Thank you for your goodness and love for me. I ask you, Father, to watch over me - always.

March 26th

Luke 23.33-56 (or short reading, Luke 23.33-46)

Jesus prays for his executors, who are as much victims of the situation as he is. On the cross he forgives the good thief, still mixing with the outcasts and forgiving them. He dies and is acclaimed by the centurion – a pawn in the story. Jesus is laid in a tomb by Joseph and the women and the tomb is sealed.

Prayer

Loving God, give me grace to find my rest in Jesus. May I know him as my Saviour and rejoice for ever in his love.

March 27th, Easter Day

Luke 24.1-53 (or short reading, Luke 24.1-12)

Luke recounts three resurrection appearances – the morning of the resurrection at the tomb, the appearance to two disciples on the road to Emmaus and an appearance to all of the disciples on the evening of the day of resurrection.

The Lord has indeed risen, alleluia!

Prayer

Holy God, I thank you that through the death and resurrection of Jesus I can share in his new life. Help me to share the good news about Jesus.