

2019-03-10 ... 10am Sermon ... Revd Sue Armstrong
Deuteronomy 26: 1 – 11; Romans 10: 8b -13; Luke 4: 1 - 13

1st Sunday of Lent

I love the traditional collect for today:

***'Almighty God,
whose son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness,
and was tempted as we are, yet without sin: give us grace to
discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit:
and, as you know our weakness, so may we know your power to save;
through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord who is alive and reigns
with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.'***

I love the collect for today because it really gives the drive to make Lent that special time when we can grow close to God's intentions for each one of us.

Knowing that Jesus faced temptations and learning from our Gospel how he dealt with them should give us the impetus to try that little bit harder with whatever our Lenten aims might be.

Discipline in what we do is, or can be quite a rarity these days – we are so used to adverts encouraging us to go for whatever is newest, best, most enjoyable etc. No thought of restraint, of waiting until things are needed or can be afforded. Sometimes they succeed in making you feel an oddity if you don't have – or want, the latest!

During the season of Lent, penitential as shown by the colour purple, we can however practise a little self-control by not indulging ourselves too much and by thinking more about those who are in less fortunate situations and how we can, as Jesus did, help them.

I have, over the years 'given up' a variety of things for Lent, chocolate, biscuits, sugar in my tea and coffee (that one has lasted!) wine (I do that every year) as a form of self-discipline, and given the appropriated amounts to charity ... but I have also tried to 'take up' things.

Time out for prayer, smiling at and speaking to everyone I pass (you get some startled looks from those waiting for the school bus!) I am helped tremendously in this by being a dog walker, you get much more response than when, as a woman alone you walk along the street smiling and speaking to people; that is often **PTO**

seen as quite suspect! But I think much can be excused for those who have dogs!

Then there is reading more widely, and 'waiting on God' just making that time to be open to His word. The six weeks of Lent do offer us a real opportunity, as we think of the temptations Jesus faced, to relate them to life today.

Then there is 'appetite' – food – we know that lack of food drives people to desperation, as well as causing deprivation and health issues, we can only be glad that the penalties imposed in the past are no longer current.

Ambition – power – just as in the past it is an ongoing temptation for those who feel powerless to achieve domination over others; we only have to see the way in which our youngsters can be groomed or persuaded into gang culture.

And of course the challenge to God – pride – in Jesus we are given our role model and as we seek to emulate him we can use this Lent to make a difference, in our lives and the lives of others.

Prayer is an incredible tool, it strengthens us, it supports and changes and enable us to discern how God holds us in his loving arms in both bad and good times and we know from our bibles how throughout the ages praying and listening to God has been important to his people.

Throughout his ministry Jesus took time to be with God, to equip him for his work – we too can use Lent to give us the time to be with God so that we, like Jesus, can be ready to be God's people and do his work.