

## Scripture Update: February 24

### St Wilfrid's Scripture Group

- St. Mark and his gospel
- Lent
- The Kingdom of God

**St. Mark:** The gospel readings for most of this year are from Mark's gospel. But who was Mark?

He was not one of the 12 disciples of Jesus, but was thought to be the son of Mary of Jerusalem whose room was where Jesus and the disciples had the last supper. John Mark, as he is also known, may have waited on them for the meal. It's thought he was the young boy in the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was arrested. He became a disciple of Peter and went on missionary journeys with Sts. Paul and Barnabus. He became Bishop of Alexandria, Egypt, where he was later martyred. It is a tradition in Ethiopia that Mark wrote his gospel there. There is a stream which is venerated, as he is thought to have made the ink for his gospel from its water. He certainly carried the gospel message to North Africa.

Mark's gospel begins with John the Baptist and the beginning of Jesus' ministry. It's full of eye witness accounts of Jesus' teachings and is a fast-moving account, which is also used by other gospel writers.

**Lent:** Lent this year begins on February 14<sup>th</sup> on Ash Wednesday. The name Lent comes from the old English word meaning "lengthen" as the days begin to get longer before summer.

Lent is observed for 40 days ending three days before Easter Sunday.

40 is a significant number in the Bible. Noah spent 40 days and nights in the ark before the rain and waters subsided. Moses led the people of Israel through the desert for 40 years. Moses and Elijah fasted in the desert for 40 days. Ezekiel laid on his right side for 40 days to bear the iniquity of Judah's sins. 40 years was considered the length of a generation. Three kings reigned for 40 years: Saul, David and Solomon. Jesus fasted in the desert for 40 days and was tempted by Satan.

Lent is traditionally a time of personal reflection and spiritual improvement. John the Baptist and Jesus called for us to change our lives and used the word "Metanoia". It is a call to love more and live a radically different life. Re-evaluate is a good word to use in Lent. What are our values? What is important to us? How do we judge other people? Are we humble and generous of spirit? Fundamentally, do we love God, others and ourselves?



**The Kingdom of God:** Jesus began his ministry by saying that the Kingdom of God had arrived.

Jesus had obviously thought deeply about how his ministry should be. He rejected the popular idea of the new Messiah who would be like a new King David who would fight Israel's enemies and restore an independent Israel away from Roman rule. This caused him problems from the outset from many groups in Israel.

He actually took his model from Israel's far past, before they had kings to a time when they were nomadic Hebrews and lived in small settlements in Canaan. They saw God as their king (this is called a theocracy) not a monarchy. The prophet Samuel warned them against having a monarchy but eventually relented and anointed Saul and then David as king.

After Israel and Judah suffered defeat by the Assyrians and then the Babylonians, a prophet arose whom we know as 2<sup>nd</sup> Isaiah who spoke of a new time when there would be a "suffering servant of Israel" Many of the characteristics of this servant we see in Jesus' ministry and Isaiah's prophecy is read in Holy Week liturgy. This peace loving, humble person would be the new way. It was a radical view point and one which Jesus identified with. His kingdom was not to be confined to only the people of Israel but all humanity and Creation; The kingdom of God, characterised by love.

## Scripture Update. St Wilfrid's Scripture Group. Can scripture help us with our mental health?

### Reflection and meditation on Genesis 1

The first book of the Bible is all about stress, family relationships and a loving creator God. There are many messages for humanity in this probably most-read book of all time. One message maybe that it can give us courage with our problems.

It starts with a really stressful situation. God has got a really big mess on his hands. It's a story of how to create order out of chaos. Most of our stressful situations which can lead to mental ill health can be a result of things getting out of hand and a disordered life ensues.

In Genesis 1 God is seen as having created all the "bits" of the universe but it's confused. So first he (anthropomorphically) rolls up his sleeves and get to work.

First of all, he takes a deep breath. The Spirit moved over the scene. Take a deep breath.

He makes light so he can see what the situation is. Let's see what the mess is *really* like. Let's get information on this.

He had a huge flood on his hands: a *real* mess when things get in the wrong place and out of order. He gives them a boundary.

He starts giving names to things. That can help to clarify the situation: identify the problem: debt, abuse, illness, bereavement, loneliness. Give it a name.

After that, he made space. He created the sky. We need space to deal with issues, we can't rush around and ignore the problem. Give it space and time.

Then he started small. He planted seeds. From very small beginnings can come great things. There is a business motto: Think big, start small and grow fast. God certainly had a big idea! Don't be discouraged by the small start you make. It's filled with hope.

After he finished all his ordering, tidying up, creating and planting, he took a step back and gave himself a whole day and thought everything was "good". Take periods of time out to reflect about your progress and draw comfort that you are not alone. The God who created everything, including you, stood back and was pleased with what he saw.

He will know your efforts and will be walking alongside you every step.



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"Love the lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and love your neighbour as you love yourself :

"Taking care of your mental health is an act of self- love" Mental Health Awareness Week.