Collect of the Day

O Lord God, You led Your ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide the people of Your Church that following our Saviour we may walk through the wilderness of this world toward the glory of the world to come; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Psalm 25:1-10
(antiphon v. 14)
Genesis 22:1-18
James 1:12-18
Mark 1:9-15

Hymns

Hymn of the Day – 656/657 or 505
Other Hymns – 547 (OT), 707 (E), 418 (G), 424 (G), 718 (G)

Prayers

Let us pray to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for He is merciful and full of compassion.

Heavenly Father, Your Son knew hunger in the wilderness and yet His reliance on You did not fail. Give to Your baptized people a steady trust in Your promises and hope in Your final deliverance. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lover of mankind, You send Your Gospel into all the world, that people might be delivered from the power of the evil one. Pour out Your Spirit continually upon all pastors and servants of Your Church, that they might proclaim Your Word with grace and boldness. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Ruler of the nations, You bid us honour those whom You have set in authority over us. Look in kindness on our president, our public servants and all who serve in our armed forces. Enable them to pursue policies that will bless this nation and make us a blessing to the nations of the world. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Bountiful Provider of all our needs, You warn Your people not to be ensnared in the love of riches or to seek lives of ease, but You invite them in union with Your Son to live as servants in this world. Remember all those who can find no gainful employment. Keep them from despair, and hear their prayers. Remember all who are tempted to think that life really does consist of the abundance of possessions, and lift their hearts to the things that truly matter. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Fountain of mercy, into Your gracious and loving arms we commend all who are sick or suffering, the hospitalized, the persecuted, the lonely, the afflicted, the grieving and the dying [especially Your servants ______________]. Bring the comfort of Your Spirit to each broken body, troubled mind or hurting soul. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord of the angelic hosts, Your angels ministered to Your Son after His time of testing and brought Him refreshment. May Your angels surround us as we partake of the refreshment of Your heavenly food for our forgiveness, that we might join them eternally in singing His praises. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Giver of the life that never ends, we offer today our praise and thanks for all whom You have brought through the many trials and temptations of this life and ushered into Your nearer presence. Bring us to share with them in the joys of the marriage feast of the Lamb. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

All of these things, and whatever else Your wisdom knows us to need, grant to us, in Your bountiful love, for the sake of Him who triumphed over the foe and rose in victory, and who now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, even Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.
Well, there’s no getting around it now. It’s Lent. The Lord of hosts has His eyes locked on salvation road. And every step from here on out goes one place – the cross. This champion must start His march from the beginning. From where Adam failed. From where Israel failed. He’s our last hope, but He’s going to do it right.

You know what He absorbed in those baptismal waters, don’t you? That’s right. Sin . . . Adam’s sin . . . Israel’s sin . . . our sin. He’s like a filthy sponge coming up out of the waters of the Jordan River. The world’s filter. But what amazes us the most is that the Father is pleased. “Do it My Son. Take their Sin away. Make Me proud.”

Immediately the Spirit throws Him out into the desert. Yeah, you heard that right. It’s violent. The Gospel of Mark describes no gentle leading. Jesus is cast out of the Promised Land. Kicked out for what He now carries . . . Israel’s sin. He is Israel condensed into One Man. And so, He is driven away from the presence of the Lord until He can overcome temptation and show some true faith. But there will be no garden of Eden for this new Adam’s temptation . . . no, just desert. No fruit trees given for Him to eat . . . just sand. It is not good for Adam to be alone, so he gets Eve . . . but not Jesus. He’s alone.

God had made His people Israel in the same desert, bringing them through the waters of the Red Sea to the holy mountain where He declared them to be His own and promised to provide for them. But even when He gave them bread every day, and sheltered them from the heat with their own personal cloud . . . they grumbled against Him and put their trust in other things. But the only grumbling Jesus has is in His stomach to the point that He might die. He has
to trust where Adam and Israel did not – but more than that . . . He has to make up for their rejection. He has to do it without all the perks they had to make it easier. And so, His stomach throbs.

Days pass. I don’t know if you’ve gone a whole day without food . . . let alone two, or three, or four. How are we to understand forty? Jesus is hungry to the point His body is consuming itself. The Word made flesh is eating Himself in order to survive. It’s a staggering thought.

Oh, but its more than hunger, isn’t it? You can almost feel the heat. The hot desert sun glares down on the sand and rocks which stretch out for miles as far as the eye can see. Not a tree. Not a shelter. Nothing but dry, dusty loneliness. Rugged. Rocky. Empty. Lifeless.

He is the true Israel reduced to One Man. He is the new Adam. He is the Seed born to crush the serpent’s head. The Scriptures from beginning to end are funnelling into this Man – in this moment . . . when He is at His weakest, resisting Satan’s temptation.

He comes to do a new thing through all this. What do you think? Do you need a new thing? Do you need some peace – some rest? Look carefully. He’s doing it. He Himself is the new relationship. Chaos is confused around Him. Disorder runs away. And the devil fails. Did you notice what finds its place of peace with Him? The wild animals. The ones made dangerous by Adam’s Fall. The ones you would never want to be staring down in the wilderness. But look at them with Him. Their wildness is calmed. That fever within them is cooled. The peace that passes all understanding is there with them in the flesh. And so, they have a place. Even these wild animals have found peace at His side. It is a beautiful picture: our weak, frail Lord sitting on a rugged rock with wild animals calmly approaching Him, restored to their pre-Fall peace. No more fear. No more fear.

It calms the wild parts of you, doesn’t it? Shows you the place of peace for all those wild passions within you. They don’t have to stay wild. They are not meant to lack peace. One has come into your desert . . . to give it some rest. And those wild parts of you that you don’t understand, or perhaps that you understand far too well, He makes them calm down. They have a place with Him. Yeah, they used to be hostile. Argumentative. Catty. But not with Jesus. No. Let them lie down there beside Him. Give them a break there by His side. For this new Adam alone brings restoration, peace, and unity.
Did you notice who else is there with Him? Yes, the holy angels. The high, spiritual ones. They’re there too. In the desert! With the wild animals. What are they doing there? Serving Jesus. He has brought the inner service of the angels out into the outer desert. He has brought the high ministry of the holy ones down to the lifeless plain of the wilderness. Because that’s where He is. Not only does He bring our wild passion to rest, He has us serve Him in the weakest, lowest place. Not only does He calm our fears and anxieties, He shows us that we serve Him by ministering in all the lifeless places in the world around us. Don’t be afraid. Serve Jesus in the least and the lowest. I’ve made all things new, He declares . . . taken care of sin and the devil for you . . . so now live free and at peace serving Me in the weak and the frail.

No. He’s not just bringing together Sin and Obedience, Unbelief and Faith, Heaven and Earth. He’s making His person the unifying center of the Wild and Holy, Old and New, Empty and Full. In our Lord’s temptation in the desert, He reveals Himself to be the gracious host of all things. And this is true for you as a person, for us as community, yes for the entire creation – ordered once more in Christ.

There is no other place for you to run. The Father has given Him to you. He comes to heal your pain, your brokenness, your guilt, by uniting it with His own person. There is only one question: Can you let Him do it for you? Will you give all of this to Him? What do you say when you see Him weak and hungry, yet asking you for your sin, your weight, and your trust? It’s time to give it to Him. To lay it on His shoulders this Lenten-tide. More than ever before. Drape yourself across this Man. Cast yourself upon Him. Make Him do this for you. For this is what He wants. And He will make all things new.

After all, “the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.” In the Name of Jesus, Amen.