

## Sermon 2023 02 18 Text

In the name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Companion on the Journey. Amen.

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Yet again this year we are using an excellent series of Lenten Studies produced by Garrett Publications for those who wish to step aside and absorb themselves in the confrontations between the way we live our lives and the way we should live our lives which are central to the Season of Lent.

The season of reflections is a season that seeks to bring us into a generous state of harmony and peace.

Peace in our hearts.  
Peace in our minds.  
Peace in our homes.  
Peace in our Church.  
Peace in our World.

And those qualities can be seen reflected in a line from one of the Collects set for today. The Collect speaks of the Great Flood destroying that which was not good and watering new beginnings of righteousness and life.

And in this new world of peace there is a new flowering of harmony.

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And I think most of us see harmony as the calm still surface of the water. But that may only be superficial. In the deep waters below there may be epic battles of life and death, anger and pain, disappointment, frustration, self-loathing and fear.

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The first study speaks of harmony as discipline. But it is a discipline that is in some way at odds with a way that we normally interpret discipline.

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The Gospel for today speaks of Jesus in the period immediately following his baptism by John. He is driven into the desert and in that isolated place of poverty he is forced to find those things of value that permanently sustain a qualitative life.

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He is subjected to temptations which merely sustain the body – bread and water. But these only allow us to move from one day to the next – living, but not alive; existing but with nothing that fills out our bodies beyond mere existence.

The images of that for me are those photographs without number of people held in death camps or as POW's of the Japanese during WWII.

The shrunken bodies that cannot stand, or can only stand with assistance. We see hateful caricatures of faces without hope and soulless, shrunken eyes – that almost plead for an ending.

The temptation is to eat and exist, to surrender just so we can face another day.

The temptation for Jesus to eat and drink in this desert place is the same sort of surrender. The temptation is to accept that which will sustain the body for another day. But the next day the gnawing hunger and thirst forces our acceptance of that which will physically sustain, but never make us fully alive.

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In the isolated place where Jesus goes to hear without distraction the prayers from God; he rejects the poverty of a meal which will merely sustain his life without purpose or quality.

He rejects a life without the discipline of our God. He rejects the superficial calm flat water that seems to offer a quality of life for eternity. He is not deluded by the calmness for he knows what lies beneath.

Ève Curie, the daughter of the physicist and chemist Marie Curie wrote that "...that peace at any price is no peace at all."

In this she echoes the disciplined heart of Jesus as he seeks to come into harmony through discipline to that dimension of a relationship with God that is only found in the deep places of the humanity that God formed from the earth and enlivened with the power of his breath.

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There is a second dimension of seeking harmony when Jesus draws apart so that he may hear God speaking.

We recognise the voice of evil and self-centredness that tempts us to give in and though starved – to eat, though thirsty – to drink.

I think the human dimension of Jesus also needs to move to those isolated places where he may hear God clearly. My suspicion is that, despite the unity, the human dimension of Jesus struggles to accept the responsibilities of the God made flesh.

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We accept that Jesus is both human and divine. If we accept that, I think we have to be conscious that, like the rest of us, there are times when the humanity of Jesus questions his calling.

Part of being in harmony with God and that harmony creating a discipline is to accept and be in the place to which God calls us.

To do less, is to also be out of harmony with God. Harmony is not just rejecting the temptations of the evil one, it is also accepting the call of the God of love. To run away, to hide, to convince ourselves that we have misheard God or to pretend not to have heard him at all is the same folly.

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If we reject the temptations of the evil one, but fail to accept the callings of God, we have only travelled half a journey. We may think ourselves noble for having faced temptation and rejected it.

But we are only disciplined in our faith, we are only in harmony with God, if we have rejected the forces of evil, and taken into ourselves completely the force for good to which God calls.

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We will not be completing our faith unless we take into ourselves the rejection of evil and the embracing of good.

Peace be in our hearts;  
Peace be in our minds;  
Peace be in our homes;  
Peace be in our Churches;  
Peace be in our nation;  
Peace be in our world.  
Amen.

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