

MONDAY

1 MARCH

Daniel 9:4-10

Psalm 79:8-9. 12. 14

Luke 6:36-38

TUESDAY

2 MARCH

Isaiah 1:10. 16-20

Psalm 50:8. 16-end

Matthew 23:1-12

WEDNESDAY

3 MARCH

Jeremiah 18:18-20

Psalm 31:4-5. 14-18

Matthew 20:17-28

THURSDAY

4 MARCH

Jeremiah 17:5-10

Psalm 1

Luke 16:19-end

FRIDAY

5 MARCH

Genesis 37:3-4.

12-13. 17-28

Psalm 105:16-22

Matthew 21:33-43.

45-46

SATURDAY

6 MARCH

Micah 7:14-15.

18-20

Psalm 103:1-4. 9-12

Luke 15:1-3. 11-end

REFLECTION

While the first readings throughout the week range across the Old Testament, mainly the prophets, the Gospel switches between Matthew and Luke, drawing Jesus towards Jerusalem and into conflict with religious authorities. Monday begins with Daniel at prayer, openly acknowledging the shame that has struck down his people.

As they have fallen away from God, so Daniel offers repentance, pleading for their forgiveness, underscoring Lenten themes of sin and divine mercy we meet at the cross.

In Monday's Gospel Jesus reminds his disciples to behave as God does – mercifully and with forgiveness. During the rest of the week Jesus confronts hierarchical and organised opposition to this way of living and behaving, most notably on Friday in Matthew's description of the parable of the vineyard workers who kill the owner's son. The week closes in a similar manner to its opening, with Micah extolling God's compassionate, forgiving nature and Luke offering the richly resonate parable about two sons, one prodigal but repentant, the other outwardly obedient yet hard-hearted, whose father models a merciful love that is costly, sacrificial and unbounded.

PRAYER

Merciful Lord,
as we travel this Lenten road to Calvary with your Son,
may we journey as servants, not oppressors,
in humility, putting aside self-justification,
not laying crosses on the backs of others,
but carrying them to relieve their burdens.
We ask this in your name.



The Prodigal Son, stained glass by Clayton & Bell, Church of St Michael, Cornhill, London
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MOTHERHOOD IN THE BIBLE

PART I – SEVEN BARREN MATRIARCHS

In the weeks surrounding Mothering Sunday, Becky Mynett takes a look at motherhood in the Bible.

In the patriarchal society of biblical times, motherhood was the primary role of women, and children were seen as the greatest blessing. The inability to have children could be seen as a punishment (of husband and wife), and a woman unable to have children was at the very least to be pitied. One theme that runs through the Bible is that of the barren woman becoming a mother.

The Jewish rabbinic tradition identifies seven barren wives who become the matriarchs of Israel. Firstly, in Genesis, there is Sarah, who was ninety when her husband Abraham was told she would bear a son. That child was Isaac, whose wife Rebekah was also barren, becoming pregnant with twins only after Isaac had prayed for her. Her son, Jacob, polygamously married two sisters, having been tricked into marrying Leah before being allowed to marry Rachel, his intended. Leah remained childless until Jacob married Rachel, but then God "saw that Leah was unloved" and "opened her womb". She went on to have four sons, but Rachel remained barren until after both sisters had used their maids as surrogates. Finally, God remembered Rachel and she was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin.

The story of the next matriarch is found in the book of Judges. We are told about a man called Manoah whose wife was barren. She was visited by an angel and told to abstain from alcohol and unclean food so that her son could be dedicated to God as a Nazirite. That boy was Samson, the Israelite hero who was a scourge of the Philistines.

The sixth matriarch was Hannah, who like Rachel was a beloved, but barren, co-wife. She prayed for a child and bore the great prophet Samuel.

In Jewish tradition, the seventh barren wife is a personification of Israel, based on Isaiah 54:1, but Christians might think of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist.

Becky is a translator, editor and writer, and Reader in the Diocese of St Albans.

LIVE
the WORDSUSTAINING YOU
THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by
Caroline Hodgson
and
Heather Smith



Second week of Lent

Monday 1 March to
Saturday 6 March
2021

WEEK