

Sermon Title: Lent - a Time to Grow

Reference Scripture: Mark 1:9-15

- Jesus's baptism and testing in the wilderness mark the start of his public ministry.
- These events lay the foundation for Lent, a season of preparation leading to Easter.
- Jesus's baptism reveals his identity as God's beloved Son.
- Affirmation from God provides Jesus with confidence and a sense of purpose.
- Our own sense of identity often stems from significant relationships.
- Similar to characters in Bernardine Evaristo's novel, our identity can feel fragile without a sense of belonging.
- Through faith in Jesus, we are welcomed into God's family and empowered for service.
- Jesus's identity as God's Son aligns with the mission of bringing God's kingdom of peace and justice.
- Lent serves as a time for growth, reflection, and transformation.
- Embrace the opportunity to deepen our identity in Christ and strive for the realisation of God's kingdom.

Discussion Points / Points to Ponder:

1. How does knowing our identity as children of God impact our daily lives and interactions?
2. Reflecting on your own journey, how has your understanding of identity evolved over time?
3. In what ways can we cultivate a deeper sense of belonging in God's family amidst secular influences?
4. Consider moments of testing or wilderness experiences in your life. How have they shaped your faith?
5. Discuss the significance of silence, solitude, and introspection in spiritual growth, especially during Lent.
6. In what practical ways can we live out our identity as children of God in our communities?
7. How does embracing our identity as beloved children of God contribute to the transformation of ourselves and the world?

Alternative Questions:

1. In Jesus's baptism, God affirms Jesus as His beloved Son. How does this affirmation of identity relate to our own understanding of identity and belonging, particularly in the context of our relationships and cultural influences?
2. The wilderness experience of Jesus symbolises a period of testing and self-reflection. How do you interpret the significance of silence, solitude, and introspection in spiritual growth, especially during times like Lent?
3. Satan's temptation of Jesus in the wilderness revolves around the question of Jesus's identity as the Son of God. How do these temptations challenge our own understanding of identity and the ways in which we resist societal pressures or cultural norms?
4. The sermon highlights the importance of surrendering our various identities to Jesus and allowing Him to redefine them. Reflecting on your own life, what identities or labels do you struggle to surrender to Christ, and why?
5. Jesus's ministry begins with the proclamation of the kingdom of God and a call to repentance. How does embracing our identity as children of God empower us to participate in God's work of transformation and restoration in the world?
6. As we journey through Lent, how can we practically incorporate elements of silence, solitude, and self-examination into our spiritual practices to deepen our sense of identity in Christ and align ourselves with the values of God's kingdom?