

10 February 2008
Lent 1, Year A

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7
Romans 5:12-19
Matthew 4:1-11

Some of you have heard this before

None of the characters in the Garden of Eden story comes off very well IMHO

- YHWH
- Eve
- Adam garden shed
- Serpent

sin of Adam, so-called Fall: covering up our real selves.

- pretending to be what we are not.
- boasting, showing off – exactly what JC refused to do at his temptations. He was invited to ...

Lent is about giving up, some say

- not silly stuff
- but giving up what we don't need

we sure don't need pretence and hypocrisy.

The layers we don't need, persona, masks

On Friday I had the privilege of officiating at the most difficult funeral I have yet taken.

- death of a young mother
- grieving husband and two daughters, one aged 7 or so, to say nothing of the rest of the family.
- truly agonising to stand there, three immensely courageous people, one clutching a large teddy bear, weep and grieve during the service.

We were very raw, utterly exposed, nothing covering our tender, true, selves. Vulnerable, without coverings,

They seemed very close to God at that service
no barrier there for God to have to get through.

We have no need of masks, of figleaves. I was raw and exposed too on Friday.

- rest of the day difficult to get through.
- wanted to withdraw into a cave, as Jesus did.
- The trouble is that in recovery I started to put on again masks of hardness and cynicism.

It really is very difficult. But we need to trust in God.

Laying down what we don't need implies that we have examined ourselves, and made some decisions about ourselves, recognising our own gifts and knowing our own faults and failings. And as we are honest about our failings, we are sorry for them. And as we are sorry for them, we try our best to work against them; from sin to holiness. This is **repentance**.

Trusting in God is **believing**. We don't claim to know, we claim to believe. So trust God.

And God is love. This simple truth we never fully grasp because we try and complicate it and see it through the layers that we cover ourselves with. But it is the Gospel.

Repent, believe, Gospel. That's what Jesus said when he began his formal ministry '**Repent and believe in the Gospel**'.

Lay down what you don't need, and go on your way lighter. My yoke is easy and my burden light.