

## **Lent Devotional February 23, 2026**

### **Scripture**

#### **Mark 1:1-13**

*1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ.*

*2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah*

*“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you  
who will prepare your way,*

*3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:*

*‘Prepare the way of the Lord;  
make his paths straight,’ ”*

*4 so John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And the whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”*

*9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove upon him. 11 And a voice came from the heavens, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”*

*12 And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. 13 He was in the wilderness forty days, tested by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels waited on him.*

### **Devotion**

#### **The Rev. Dr. James W. Kirk '08/'20**

In today’s reading, the Gospel’s writer, Mark, begins quickly and does not waste any time letting us know who Jesus is, what He did on earth, and why He came. Like the Gospel of John, Mark’s Gospel does not begin with the birth of Jesus. He begins with the preparation for Jesus by John the Baptist. And as our season of Lent has begun, we are reflecting, waiting, humbling ourselves, and re-centering our lives.

I began to think about this season of preparation as I was driving in the rain. I am sure many of us have windshield wipers that have an intermittent setting to ensure that our focus remains on the road during light rain or mist. On this day, my wipers just would not keep my windshield completely clear, and my focus drifted to the wipers themselves. I had to slam on my brakes to avoid running into the back of a car that had stopped in front of me! After I had calmed my nerves down, I re-focused on the road ahead and did continue my journey.

John the Baptist prepares the way in the wilderness for Jesus to begin His journey here on earth, to fulfill His purpose for coming. For 40 days, Jesus travels into the wilderness to be tempted. Our Lenten journeys continue for 40 days as we prepare to continue our faith lives and perhaps to sharpen our focus. It is so easy to lose our focus—whether it's driving or just living day to day.

During Lent, a lot of us can begin to think about those things in our lives that need to change. Maybe some things are out of control so that we tend to lose our focus on Christ. We want to turn away from 'those sins' or give up 'those things,' and we forget that we are turning toward Christ! Christ has taught us that even we can walk thru temptation with His strength by keeping our focus. Instead of focusing on the wipers, stay focused on the bigger picture in front of us . . . the cross! Keep your focus. Stay 'cross-eyed'!

### **Prayer**

God of our lives, we thank You for helping us to re-center our lives each day. Today, continue to walk with us and clear our vision to see where we are turning toward You. As we turn away from those things that separate us from You, help us to see where we are going and how You are leading us. Take care of us as we take care of others. Amen.