

Lay Preachers' Bulletin

Lectionary Notes – February 2026

February's lectionary notes have been provided by The Rev. Dr. Julio Simoes, Incumbent - Christ Church, Fort Macleod.

February 1 - Epiphany 4

Propers - BAS page 352

Gospel: [Matthew 5:1-12](#)

BACKGROUND:

Matthew presents Jesus ascending the mountain and sitting to teach in a way that deliberately evokes Israel's memory of Sinai, yet transforms it. What unfolds is not a private revelation to one mediator, but a communal encounter in which God addresses a gathered people. The mountain remains the place of divine disclosure, but here it becomes a shared space, where law is given not to divide or control, but to reorient a community toward a renewed way of seeing and living together.

TEXTUAL NOTES:

- "He went up the mountain... and he sat down" (5:1):
The mountain signals divine encounter; sitting marks authoritative teaching. Yet unlike Sinai, there is no exclusion or fear—Jesus' authority gathers rather than distances.

- "His disciples came to him" (5:1):
The teaching is addressed to a community, not to isolated individuals. Discipleship here is collective before it is personal.

- "He opened his mouth and taught them" (5:2):
A formal teaching formula, emphasizing intentional, public instruction—law given as blessing, not as threat.

- The Beatitudes as declaration, not command:
Each “Blessed are...” names a reality God is already bringing into being, especially among those the world devalues or silences.
Plural vision, singular voice:
Christ speaks as one, but the reception of his words unfolds within a diverse body, whose shared discernment becomes the living echo of that voice (sensus fidelium).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. In a culture where disagreement often leads to withdrawal or domination, how might listening itself become an act of faithfulness?
2. What would it mean for us to treat our differences not as threats, but as places where God may be inviting deeper communal discernment?

LITURGICAL CONTEXT:

Epiphany 4 opens with the prayer, “O God, you make all things new,” framing this passage as a revelation of God’s renewing work not only in individuals, but in how communities live with difference. In a world shaped by fracture and coercion, the Church is called to embody another way: one in which Christ’s voice is heard through patient, faithful, and shared listening—making new what the world has learned to break apart.

February 8 - Epiphany 5

Propers - BAS page 353

Gospel: [Matthew 5:13-20](#)

BACKGROUND:

Immediately following the Beatitudes, Jesus turns from naming God's blessing to describing the vocation of those who receive it. Forgiveness and blessing are not ends in themselves; they free a people to live with clarity, integrity, and purpose. In this passage, Jesus situates his followers within Israel's ongoing relationship with the Law, not as its destroyers, but as those called to live it faithfully and visibly in the world.

TEXTUAL NOTES:

- "You are the salt of the earth... you are the light of the world" (5:13–14):
Salt and light do not exist for themselves. Both function by remaining true to what they are. To lose "saltiness" is to lose identity, not relevance.

- Visibility without self-display (5:15–16):
The light is not lit to glorify itself, but so that others may see and give glory to God. Faithfulness is public, but never performative.

- "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets" (5:17):
Jesus places himself firmly within Israel's tradition. Fulfillment here means bringing the Law to its full depth and intention, not reshaping it to suit personal preference.

- "Not one letter, not one stroke" (5:18):
This echoes a well-known Jewish concern: that even the smallest alteration can change meaning. The warning is not against interpretation, but against careless or self-serving distortion.

- Greater righteousness (5:20):
Jesus contrasts surface-level correctness with a deeper fidelity — one that resists both legalism and manipulation, and instead seeks truth with humility and care.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. Where might faithfulness require us to remain true to the text rather than reshaping it to fit our assumptions?
2. How can we learn to live with tension where Scripture allows it, without imposing certainty where it does not?

LITURGICAL CONTEXT:

Epiphany 5 continues the season's theme of revelation: God's light made visible in the life of a forgiven people. Having been freed to serve God "with a quiet mind," the Church is called not to invent a new law, but to embody the true intention of God's Word — discerning carefully, speaking humbly, and living faithfully in a world quick to impose, distort, or discard meaning.

February 15 - Transfiguration

Propers - BAS page 418

Gospel: [Matthew 17:1-9](#)

BACKGROUND:

Throughout Epiphany, God is revealed in Christ in ways both public and restrained. In the Transfiguration, this revelation reaches a decisive moment: not addressed to all, but entrusted to a few who are willing to climb the mountain with Jesus. This is not exclusion, but preparation. What is glimpsed here will later be revealed fully in cross and resurrection. Epiphany does not end because God stops revealing Godself, but because the mode of revelation is about to change.

TEXTUAL NOTES:

- “Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John” (17:1):
Unlike earlier moments where the invitation was broad, this ascent is limited. Epiphany here is intimate rather than public — a revelation given to those close enough to see, yet not yet ready to speak of it.

- The mountain as place of transformation:
As in Matthew 5, the mountain remains the space of divine encounter. But now the focus shifts from teaching to unveiling — not new words, but a new way of seeing Jesus.

- Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus:
The Law and the Prophets do not instruct Jesus; they converse with him. Their presence affirms that Jesus does not abolish Israel’s tradition but embodies and fulfills it.

- “This is my Son... listen to him” (17:5):
The voice from the cloud does not add new information; it clarifies attention. Revelation culminates not in spectacle, but in the call to listen.

- Silence after the vision (17:9):

What is revealed cannot yet be proclaimed. Some truths are not hidden because they are secret, but because they require time, suffering, and faith to be understood.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What might it mean to accept that some revelations are given not for proclamation, but for preparation?
2. Where might God be inviting us to deeper attention rather than immediate certainty?

LITURGICAL CONTEXT:

The Last Sunday of Epiphany marks the final unveiling before the long concealment of Lent. Here, glory is glimpsed — not to be grasped, but to be remembered. As the Church prepares to descend from the mountain and walk toward the cross, the Transfiguration offers a sustaining vision: Christ revealed not apart from suffering, but already oriented toward it.

February 22 - Lent 1

Propers - BAS page 286

Gospel: [Matthew 4:1-11](#)

BACKGROUND:

At the beginning of Lent, Matthew presents Jesus led into the wilderness by the Spirit, not as punishment, but as preparation. This passage is not primarily about an external enemy attacking Jesus, but about the human encounter with temptation itself. The wilderness becomes the place where identity is clarified, vocation is tested, and faithfulness is chosen freely rather than assumed.

TEXTUAL NOTES:

- “Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness” (4:1):
The same Spirit present at Jesus’ baptism now leads him into testing. Temptation is not outside God’s concern, but part of the human journey God is willing to enter.

- The tempter (ho diabolos) as function, not character:
In the Greek text, the emphasis is on the act of tempting rather than on a personalized figure. The struggle is interior and human: temptation does not require an external agent to be real or destructive.

- First temptation: separation from creation (4:3–4):
Turning stones into bread is not about hunger alone, but about refusing creaturely dependence. It is the temptation to bypass creation rather than live within it.

- Second temptation: power without faithfulness (4:8–9):
Dominion over the world is offered without the cost of obedience. This is the temptation to secure outcomes by self-centered control rather than trust.

- Third temptation: religious certainty without trust (4:5–7):
Scripture itself is quoted, reminding us that misuse of sacred texts can become a form of temptation when trust is replaced by presumption.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. Where do we recognize temptation not as something imposed on us, but as something arising from within our own desires?
2. How might Lent invite us to remain faithfully human rather than seeking shortcuts around dependence, trust, and humility?

LITURGICAL CONTEXT:

This is the First Sunday in Lent, not of Lent. Even as the season calls for discipline and self-examination, Sunday remains a celebration of resurrection. The Church pauses its fasting to remember that repentance is sustained not by fear or effort alone, but by the grace already given in Christ. Lent begins not with condemnation, but with the assurance that temptation can be faced—and resisted—within God’s faithfulness.