

**Luke 4:1-13**

1 Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit through the wilderness, 2 being tempted there by the devil for forty days. During that time he ate nothing and at the end he was hungry. 3 Then the devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to turn into a loaf.' 4 But Jesus replied, 'Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone.'

5 Then leading him to a height, the devil showed him in a moment of time all the kingdoms of the world 6 and said to him, 'I will give you all this power and the glory of these kingdoms, for it has been committed to me and I give it to anyone I choose. 7 Worship me, then, and it shall all be yours.' 8 But Jesus answered him, 'Scripture says: You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.'

9 Then he led him to Jerusalem and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said to him, 'throw yourself down from here, 10 for Scripture says: He will put his angels in charge of you to guard you, 11 and again: They will hold you up on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.' 12 But Jesus answered him, 'It has been said: You must not put the Lord your God to the test.' 13 Having exhausted all these ways of tempting him, the devil left him, to return at the appointed time.

Other readings: Deuteronomy 26:4-10 Psalm 90 (91) Romans 10:8-13

It is an ancient tradition that we read the gospel of the temptation of Jesus on the first Sunday of Lent. There is the obvious connection that Jesus spends forty days in the wilderness, but there are deeper reasons. In each of the synoptic gospels we are told how, before his ministry begins, Jesus, filled with the Spirit, encounters the spirit of evil. It is what his ministry is all about. It is what our lives are all about. To overcome evil with goodness is the constant challenge of the gospel.

In the longer narratives in Matthew and Luke we are given what amounts to a profound reflection on the nature of temptation. To use God-given powers for selfish ends is a temptation rife in our modern times. To worship the source of evil recalls our modern confusion about what is morally good and morally bad. To put God to the test is similarly familiar. Jesus withstands each of these tests. Our gospel ends with the departure of the devil 'to return at the appointed time'. Luke knows that the critical time will come at Calvary.

*Which temptations are present in my life and how should I withstand them?*

*Do I share the moral confusion of the present time?*

*Let us pray for honesty in order to change our attitudes and our behaviour.*

*Let us pray for the strength of God's Spirit to put our lives to right this Lent.*

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