

Luke 4.1-13; Deut.26.1-11; Romans 10.8b-13.  
8 am & 10 am @ St. Andrew's Totteridge  
1st Sunday of Lent: 14th February 2016.

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts always be acceptable in your sight, O Lord my strength and my redeemer (Ps 19:14)*

Here's a little quote from Milton (1608-1674), *Paradise Regained* Bk.1, in which he sings the praises of one man's conviction and determination, encapsulating what happened in that extraordinary reading from Luke:

I, WHO erewhile the happy Garden sung  
By one man's disobedience lost, now sing  
Recovered Paradise to all mankind,  
By one man's firm obedience fully tried  
Through all temptation, and the Tempter foiled  
In all his wiles, defeated and repulsed,  
And Eden raised in the waste Wilderness.

The poet well understood the importance of Christ's temptation in the desert in the grand sweep of biblical narrative, where Eden, Heaven, Paradise, is made real in the vast, barren wastes of an inhospitable wilderness. This is an invasion of God into a human world, which will culminate in a new heaven and a new earth; a timely reminder of the Lenten disciplines of resisting the world, the flesh and the devil. Jesus is to triumph where the first Valentine lovers, Adam and Eve, failed, and thus become the head of a new humanity.

The first temptation (v.3) emphasizes Christ's divinity. This would not have worked on you or me for we have no power to turn stones into bread. Jesus needed to be human at this time, and demonstrate obedience to the Father as a human being, living appropriately as a son of Adam. Adam fell, in spite of God's clear command; Christ was obedient to the word and refused to act independently of it.

The second temptation (vv.5-7) turns on who has ultimate authority, with Satan demanding Christ acknowledge him as the ultimate power. But Christ speaks only the word that offers exclusive worship to God.

The third temptation (vv.9-11) brings the focus on to Christ's trust in scripture. As Shakespeare noted in *The Merchant of Venice*, 'the devil can cite scripture for his purpose.' This is a subtle business; as believers we have to trust God's word and step out in faith, but mercifully, we're not often asked to step off of tall buildings. Christ saw no scriptural indicators that said this might be required, so the evil invitation that sought to test his power and resolve were also refused.

It was this appreciation of Christ's wisdom, his courage and determination, that enabled the Apostle Paul to place his entire faith in the God/Christ: 'For "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."' But part of calling on God must involve acknowledging all he has done for us in creation and in scripture.

Paul echoes Deuteronomy, where the land is known to be Yahweh's gracious gift in fulfillment of his promise. The terrain 'flowing with milk and honey' symbolized plenty and security, tangible testimony to the faithfulness of God and good grounds for thanksgiving and worship. Paul says we are to 'confess with your lips' and 'believe in your heart.'

Why? - because through Christ's resurrection we find that our salvation, even in death, is guaranteed. Paul believes that Jesus is raised from the dead – but this is no mere mental assent but life-changing recognition, available not just to a respectable elite, but to Jew and Greek alike, to everyone of any ethnic background.

So the devil left our Lord until an opportune time. He's never very far away, luring us with worldly gifts and prizes. Today, in most supermarkets, in glossy magazines, at home or work or at play, via the various forms of electronic media beaming images 24/7, we are surrounded by temptation in ways never before imagined. So, in a way perhaps more urgent than ever before, there is a need for our response.

The Israelites brought the first fruits of their harvests to the priests attending the house of God. We can resist the temptations of the world every time we pray, every time we give thanks, every time we have faith. We spread the Word of God's love, whenever we believe with our hearts and confess with our lips, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

## Luke 4.1-13      The Temptation of Jesus

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, <sup>2</sup>where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. <sup>3</sup>The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.' <sup>4</sup>Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone." '

<sup>5</sup>Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup>And the devil said to him, 'To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. <sup>7</sup>If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.' <sup>8</sup>Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." '

<sup>9</sup>Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, <sup>10</sup>for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you",

<sup>11</sup>and

"On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." '

<sup>12</sup>Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." ' <sup>13</sup>When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

## Deuteronomy 26.1-11 First Fruits & Tithes

When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, <sup>2</sup>you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. <sup>3</sup>You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, 'Today I declare to the

Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.' <sup>4</sup>When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, <sup>5</sup>you shall make this response before the Lord your God: 'A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. <sup>6</sup>When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labour on us, <sup>7</sup>we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. <sup>8</sup>The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; <sup>9</sup>and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. <sup>10</sup>So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me.' You shall set it down before the Lord your God and bow down before the Lord your God. <sup>11</sup>Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house.

## Romans 10.8b-13.

<sup>8</sup>But what does it say?

'The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); <sup>9</sup>because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. <sup>11</sup>The scripture says, 'No one who believes in him will be put to shame.' <sup>12</sup>For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. <sup>13</sup>For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

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