

READING AND PRAYERS FOR 9 March, Lent 1

Collect

God of mercy,
your word was the sure defence of Jesus
in his time of testing.
Minister to us in the wilderness of our temptation,
that we who have been set free
from the power of sin and death
through the waters of baptism
might serve you well into eternal life.
We ask this in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Genesis 2:7-9, 16-18, 25: *In this reading God created the first human being from the dust of the earth and breathed life into this person. God then placed this human in Eden, saying that anything can be eaten from any tree with two exceptions: the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the fruit of the tree of life. The Lord made the human a helper, a partner. Of course, before long, they were tempted to take that which is forbidden and they give in to that temptation (sound familiar?).*

The LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.’

Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.’ And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God say, “You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?”’ The woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, “You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the

middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.” ’ But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

Romans 5:12-19: *Paul compared Adam’s disobedience to Jesus’ obedience, saying that if sin and death came into the world through the actions of one man (Adam), then the free gift of grace, justification, righteousness and eternal life have come into the world through the actions of Jesus the Christ (through his cross, the true Tree of Life).*

Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned— sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man’s trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man’s sin. For the judgement following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of the one man’s trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Therefore just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.

Matthew 4:1-11: *The first Sunday of Lent always calls to mind Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness by the devil. Note that the gospel records this taking place after Jesus’ baptism and that it was the Spirit that led Jesus into this place of temptation. Jesus is tempted to use his power for his own benefit. Where the first humans failed in their battle with temptation, Jesus was victorious, choosing to serve God above all else, including himself.*

After being baptized, Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone,

but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" ' Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you", and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." '

Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." ' Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." ' Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Immediately after his Baptism in Jordan, we read, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. From the water to the wilderness, He walked the way of Israel as Israel is reduced to One person. He was alone, isolated for forty days and forty nights, hungry from fasting. He was the perfect target for the tempter.

The devil came to Jesus when he was alone and hungry, questioning Jesus' identity. "If you are the Son of God," he said to Jesus. There's that temptation to doubt our royal heritage, directed at Jesus. You are the Son of God, aren't you Jesus? Did the Father really say that in your Baptism? 'This is my beloved Son?' Or perhaps you were hearing things, or maybe you misheard. Did God really say that?"

We then read that the tempter pointed to the wilderness stones all around Jesus. The devil used the gift of those stones for darkness, to tempt the Son. "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread." "You have the power, don't you Jesus? You made these stones. If you can do that, you can certainly change them into bread to fill your empty stomach. Who would know that you

cheated on your fast? There's no one here to see you. But me." Jesus would be in his debt. And he would know that he had cheated.

For Jesus to turn those stones to bread would have been a betrayal of who he was and why he came. He came to serve not to be served. He came to humble himself to death not be exalted in life. He came to feed the five thousand in the wilderness by multiplying bread, not to feed himself by destroying stones. His food was to do his Father's will and die for the world. Jesus responded, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

A second time the devil tempted Jesus. This time he took him to the highest point in the city, the pinnacle of the temple, and he quoted Scripture to Jesus. "He will give His angels charge of you, on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone." That's psalm 91. You are the Son of God, aren't you, Jesus? The Bible says the angels will catch you and you won't even stub your little toe. Jump! You trust God's Word, don't you, Jesus? You are the Son of God, aren't you? So jump and let the angels catch you on the way down.

It was a common belief that when the Messiah came he would appear on top of the temple and leap down to earth. A hero Messiah. People would follow that Messiah more than a suffering, self-denying, "dying for others" kind of Messiah.

A third time the devil came to Jesus. He took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of this world and their glory. The big prize. The lottery payoff. This is what men aspire to: power, riches, glory. "All these things I will give you, if you fall down and worship me." "It's all yours, Jesus. All the kingdoms of this world in all their glory. Never mind that messy business of a cross. You can have it all now. I'll surrender them to you. Worship me." Jesus responded, "Worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve."

In this life, you will be tempted. You will be tempted to satisfy your own cravings and desires at all and any cost. You will be tempted to test God's Word, to try and prove it to be true. You will be tempted to barter for power, wealth, riches, fame, glory. You will be tempted to forget who you are. You will be tempted to forget that you are the child of God that you are.

When tempted, remember who you are. You are baptized. You're a child of God in the Son of God. Your life is in Christ, not only in yourself. Hidden in Christ, you're no match for temptation or the tempter. One little Word of God in human flesh has felled him. Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Concluding Prayers

For the Tree of Golgotha, Jesus' cross, our true tree of life, by whose just fruit we live; the church worships you, O God. May your people ever praise and serve you.

O God of the seas and rains, we praise you for watering and sustaining all things living. We bless you for the waters flowing from Jesus' pierced side. Give to all candidates of baptism, and to all the baptized, the sure hope of your grace.

Send us to the nations where there is a famine of the word; show us those who await the bread of life; and confront us with those who suffer in hunger. May our abundance supply their need.

Lord and judge of all, confirm what is good and just in the hearts of those who rule the nations. Bless Charles, our king, and all in authority that they govern in justice the peoples whom you have made.

We pray for all who desire wisdom, for all who need hands to bear them up, for the naked and the outcast, for the sick and for all in need of your gift of abundant health.

Lord our God,
in serve age you call a people
to serve you alone.
Renew us in these Lenten days.
Washed clean of sin,
sealed by the Spirit,
and sustained by your living Word,
may we remain true to our calling
and be one in serving you.
Grant this through Christ,
our liberator from sin
who lives with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
holy and mighty God, now and forever.

For our Parish.

O GOD the Holy Ghost, Sanctifier of the faithful:
Sanctify this parish by thine abiding presence
especially at this time when some feel they cannot gather together.
Enlighten the minds of thy people more and more

with the light of the everlasting Gospel.
Bring erring souls to the knowledge of God our Saviour;
and those who are walking in the way of life,
keep steadfast unto the end.
Give patience to the sick and afflicted,
and renew them in body and soul.
Guard from forgetfulness of thee those who are strong and prosperous.
Increase in us thy manifold gifts of grace,
and make us all to be fruitful in good works;
O blessed Spirit, whom with the Father and the Son together
we worship and glorify, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

Lord's Prayer

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

THE peace of God,
which passeth all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds
in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord:
And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,
be amongst you and remain with you always. *Amen*