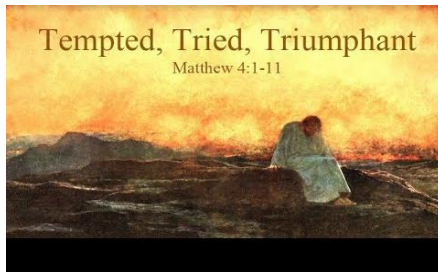


LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL

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FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

22nd February 2026

Matt. 4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. ³ The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” ⁴ But he answered, “It is written,

One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Matt. 4:5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ 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.’”

⁷ Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Matt. 4:8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; ⁹ and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written,
Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him.”

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

The “Temptation of the Son of God” is found in four documents in the New Testament: in the Mark 1:12-13, Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13 and in Hebrews 2:10-18 and 4:15-16. Mark’s account is quite minimal. Matthew and Luke are very alike, although Luke has a different order (bread, mountain, Temple). The temptations are a literary anticipation of the final disputes between Jesus and the Jewish leadership (21:23-22:46). What is at stake throughout is Jesus’ vision of the Kingdom of God.

KIND OF WRITING

- (i) Commonly in ancient accounts, the “hero” is tested in some fashion, before undertaking his heroic role. The test usually foreshadows realities to follow. It is not, therefore, a story about temptation to this or that moral deviation, but rather a testing of identity and role. Given that Jesus is the Son of God, what kind of Son of God will he be?
- (ii) Our story resembles the typical manner of “robust” dispute among rabbis of the period. These often argued by firing texts from Scripture at each other.
- (iii) It is a symbolic tale, with a deep, non-literal meaning. (This helps us deal with the impossibility of seeing all of the kingdoms from one mountain and with the mild absurdity of Satan “whisking” Jesus hither and thither.)

KIERAN O’MAHONY – www.tarsus.ie

REFLECTION - As we begin another Lent we might find it hard to relate to the dramatic struggle told for us in the gospel. Our experience of temptation is probably more mundane. They are the daily temptations not to bother, or to simply to with the crowd. We are tempted to believe that what we do is not going to make any difference anyway. However, the end result is the same, God is squeezed out of our lives and in living only for ourselves we become miserable. Lent is an opportunity to rediscover the joy and freedom there is in living for others as Christ did. So let’s begin this season by inviting him to show us how to do that and how to both recognize and then reject the voice of the tempter.

SEAN GOAN – Let the Reader Understand Year A

Pointers for prayer

1. In today's gospel Jesus is enticed to gratify his own needs, or to perform some spectacular act in public. He rejects the temptation because he chooses commitment to his mission and to dependence on his Father over any immediate gratification. We can all be tempted to go for some immediate satisfaction, but is that where happiness lies? Have you found that sometimes there is more contentment in saying 'no' for the sake of some long-term goal? What are the goals, aims, values that inspire you in this way?
2. One way of looking at this gospel is to say that Jesus went into the desert to face his demons. We all have demons we need to face - compulsions, fears, prejudices, anger, and urges that lurk within. It is in facing our demons that we find a way to live a fuller life. Can you recall a time when you grew through facing a 'demon' in this way?
3. In one of her reflections Joyce Rupp describes Lent as a 'time to rediscover lost treasures'. Is there something that once was a healthy part of your life and is no longer there: e.g., reading, exercise, mindfulness, prayer, socializing, fun? Would this Lent be a time to rediscover that lost treasure?

JOPHN BYRNE OSA —Intercom

Like all who see their lives as a grateful response to God's call, Jesus must make the basic choice to trust God, whatever the circumstances he finds himself in. In this story, under very great pressure, Jesus make his choice. Who does he remind you of at this moment of decision? The story is told as a journey in three stages:

Verse 1: Identify any wilderness into which you – or someone you know, or your community – have been lead by the spirit .

Verse 3 to 10: The three temptations are three aspects of the one temptation not to trust God, or, stated in positive terms, to follow the way of achievement rather than that of trust. Repeat Jesus 'three responses to yourself many times until you can identify with them.

Verse 11: This is the moment when an individual (or a community) who has remained faithful through a long temptation experiences the love and care, and God sends angels to look after his faithful ones.

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL – LECTIO DIVINA

Jesus, exhausted but full of the Spirit reacts to the first temptation. He will not be looking to his own interest. He will not be an egoistical Messiah. He will multiply bread when he sees the poor hungry. In the second temptation he will not put God at the service of his own glory. His only sign will be to cure the sick. In the third temptation he will not be a dominating Messiah, but one who serves. God does not impose but offers love to humanity. The church must banish all temptations of power, glory and domination by shouting with Jesus, Away from me Satan.

José A. Pagola - Following in the Footsteps of Jesus - Year A

Why should it matter if Jesus uses his power and privilege to gain prestige for himself? ... But Jesus calls out the temptations for what they are - empty, distorted promises that go against everything that he is. Jesus does not look down on people but accompanies them. He does not live for himself but in service of others.

During Lent we are invited to take stock of our direction in life, to reflect on what temptations or stumbling blocks might be holding us back. The 'me-first' messaging of our culture encourages a reductive understanding of what it means to be a responsible human. It is not enough to float through life as though our indulgences are the most important thing and our actions do not have consequences. Jesus calls us to engage with the world, to put others first, to use our privilege for the benefit of others rather than ourselves.

Sometimes indifference can come from feeling paralysed or overwhelmed by the enormity of a crisis. Small actions can help us move out of this spiral. Think about what steps you might take this Lent to engage with an issue in your community. How can you be of service?

TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT—Go Deeper