

06 March 2022

GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

Hymn

Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins. **whose mercy endures for ever.**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.
And also with you.

Sentence

Worship the Lord your God and serve only him. Luke 4.8

Prayer of Preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of the Day

O saving God, who led your people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land: so guide us that, following our Saviour, we may walk through the wilderness of this world and be brought to the glory of the world which is to come; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Deuteronomy 26.1-11

¹ When you have entered the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, ² take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land that the Lord your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name ³ and say to the priest in office at the time, 'I declare today to the Lord your God that I have come to the land the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.' ⁴ The priest shall take the basket from your hands and set it down in front of the altar of the Lord your God. ⁵ Then you shall declare before the Lord your God: 'My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. ⁶ But the Egyptians ill-treated us and made us suffer, subjecting us to harsh labour. ⁷ Then we cried out to the Lord, the God of our ancestors, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. ⁸ So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. ⁹ He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; ¹⁰ and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, Lord, have given me.' Place the basket before the Lord your God and bow down before him. ¹¹ Then you and the Levites and the foreigners residing among you shall rejoice in all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household.

Psalm 91.1-2, 91.9-16

¹ Those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High: who abide under the shadow of the Almighty,

² They will say to the Lord 'You are my refuge and my stronghold: my God in whom I trust.'

⁹ The Lord himself is your refuge: you have made the Most High your stronghold.

¹⁰ Therefore no harm will befall you: nor will any scourge come near your tent.

¹¹ For he will command his angels: to keep you in all your ways.

¹² They will bear you up in their hands: lest you dash your foot against a stone.

¹³ You will tread on the lion and the adder: the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.

¹⁴ 'You have set your love upon me,' says the Lord, 'and therefore I will deliver you:

I will lift you out of danger, because you have known my name.

¹⁵ 'When you call upon me I will answer you: I will be with you in trouble, I will rescue you and bring you to honour. ¹⁶ 'With long life I will satisfy you: and fill you with my salvation.'

Romans 10.4-13

⁴ Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. ⁵ Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: 'The person who does these things will live by them.' ⁶ But the righteousness that is by faith says: 'Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?"' (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ 'or "Who will descend into the deep?"' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? 'The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,' that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: ⁹ if you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹ As Scripture says, 'Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.' ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Luke 4.1-15

¹ Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. ³ The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.' ⁴ Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man shall not live on bread alone."' ⁵ The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And he said to him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendour; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.' ⁷ If you worship me, it will all be yours.' ⁸ Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only."' ⁹ The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰ For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; ¹¹ they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" ¹² Jesus answered, 'It is said: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ¹³ When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. ¹⁴ Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. ¹⁵ He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

Sermon

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who
with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The prayers

Let us pray for the world and for the Church.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3.16

Compassion and forgiveness belong to the Lord our God, though we have rebelled and wandered far off.

Let us then ask for mercy, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

Confession

Merciful God, our maker and our judge,

we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do:

we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves;

we repent, and are sorry for all our sins. Father, forgive us.

Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith: pardon you and set you free from all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

Hymn

OFFERTORY

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have these gifts to share.

Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom. **Blessed be God for ever.**

Thanksgiving 5

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Loving God, we thank you for this world of wonder and delight.

You have given it to us to care for, so that all your creatures may enjoy its bounty.

Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

We thank you that when we turned away from you, you sent Jesus to live and work as one of us, and bring us back to you. He showed us how to love you and set us free to love and serve one another.

Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

We thank you that on the cross Jesus took away our sin, all that keeps us from each other and from you. He frees us from hate and fear, from all that destroys love and trust.

Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

And so with everyone who believes in you, with all the saints and angels, we rejoice and praise you, saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

And now we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine; may we who receive them, as Jesus said, share his body and his blood.

On the night he was betrayed, he took bread and gave you thanks.

He broke the bread and gave it to his friends, and said,

'Take and eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper he took the cup and gave you thanks.

He shared the cup with them and said, 'This is my blood poured out so that sins may be forgiven.

Do this in remembrance of me.'

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

You have gathered us together to feed on Christ and to remember all he has done for us:

Fill us with your Spirit that we may follow Jesus in all we do and say, working for justice and bringing your peace to this world that you have made. Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen.

As this broken bread was once many grains, which have been gathered together and made one bread:

so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

The gifts of God for the people of God.

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your body and soul to everlasting life.

Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your body and soul to everlasting life.

Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

Living God, in this holy meal you fill us with new hope.

May the power of your love, which we have known in word and sacrament, continue your saving work among us, give us courage for our pilgrimage, and bring us to the joys you promise.

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.

Hymn

Blessing

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord;

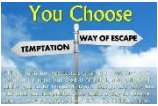
and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen**



When you think of Jesus do you think of a sort of spiritual Superman or do you think of a human being just like you and I who faced extreme pressures but relied totally on God and was only different in that he always won against temptation. The wonder is not that Jesus was incapable of sinning but that he was able to avoid sinning although he was tempted



After his baptism Jesus faced the double question, what does it mean to be God's son in this special unique way while still being fully human? And what sort of messiah was he to be? There has been quite a few 'want to be Messiah's' in the years proceeding Jesus, some claiming to be able to do great miracles and other who wanted to fight the Romans, but they had all come to bad ends. There was a great expectation in that time that the Messiah would be a military hero, who would free the Israelites from their dominance by the Romans.

How could Jesus, coming through the water of baptism as God's unique son, the one through whom Israel's destiny is to be fulfilled, answer the question: How can he deliver Israel and thereby the world, from the grip of the enemy, sin? How can he bring real liberation, not just political freedom but from evil itself?

In many ways the three temptations enabled Jesus to make these decisions. The story does not envisage Jesus engaged in conversation with a visible figure to whom he could talk as talk as one to another; the devil's voice appears as a string of natural ideas in his own head. In exactly the same way as we face temptations, and like our temptations Jesus's temptation were plausible, attractive and make a lot of sense.

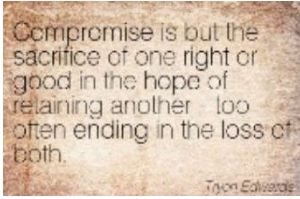


it would be quite ridiculous that God would expect his son to be famished with hunger, wouldn't it? I'm the son of God surely, I get a few benefits. I've been working hard; I deserve an extra treat, don't I?

Jesus is challenged to repeat the sign of God's provision for the people but if he makes bread for himself, he abuses his sonship by serving his own needs rather than depending on God's provision for his needs. This partial quote from scripture is sufficient to define human life as more than meeting one's own physical needs. The work of the son would have to involve more than that.

If Jesus had satisfied his own hunger, why not also stop looking after people whenever he got tired. Why bother putting up with the disciples when they were slow to understand, why bother healing and teaching ordinary people who were so less important than him. Why bother suffering all that pain and

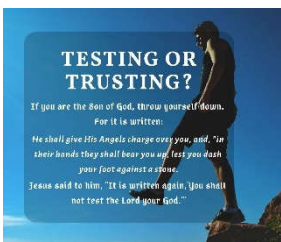
rejection which culminated on the cross when at any time he could have just decided to walk away and look after his own needs.



If God's desire was for Jesus to be sovereign over the world, then why not go for it in one easy stride? God wants me to reign over the earth why not save time and just do it? God has told me to do this ministry why don't I just use this money that was put aside for a different purpose to get it going quickly.

Jesus is challenged to gain power by compromise, to take the easy route and avoid the painful journey to take the nice easy road but the truth is that often God's Road is the difficult road, that much of what is to be achieved is actually achieved through taking the difficult path. We do God's will, bless others, and learn by following God's plan.

Imagine if Jesus has succumbed to this temptation: the disciples would never have been called, they would never have learned to walk with him, the New Testament would never have been lived, let alone written down and we and millions of others would never have heard of how much God loves us.



If Jesus is Israel's messiah, why not prove it by a spectacular display of power? If I can show everyone who I am by letting them see God saving me, I will be able to reach so many more people much quicker and they will believe me. God has promised that he will meet all my needs so if I buy this thing that I want so badly he will provide enough to pay the bills next week.

Jesus is tempted to put God to the test, specifically to assume that God will save his life if he jumps off the highest point of the temple which would give him huge notoriety but no access to people's lives and hearts.

If Jesus had done this, people would also be clamouring for the next display of power, show me another miracle, show us another circus trick. Such notoriety would make it so hard for people to see him as a person with needs and difficulties like their own. If he did it that time why not have God save him on the cross, why bother suffering at all.



The answers to those question about Jesus's role in history is that he must begin by defeating evil at the most personal and intimate level. Christians today sometimes make the mistake of thinking that as long as they are pursuing the right goals in their public lives, what they do in private doesn't matter so much. This is the same lie Jesus heard in the wilderness, every second of your life counts, every thought contributes to making you who you are.

If God is working by his spirit through a person, that person's will be increasingly formed by the spirit, through testing at every level. If Jesus had not won, the victory in the wilderness there would have been no point in carrying on.



Physical needs and wants are important, but loyalty to God is more important. Jesus is indeed the world's true Lord but the path to that status and the form of it when it arrives, is humble service. The power that Jesus will shortly display is to be used for restoring others to life and strength, not for cheap stunts. His status as God's son commits him, not to showy prestige, but to the strange path of humility service and finally death.

The enemy did return on numerous occasions to continue to test Jesus and try to deflect him from his path but having resisted once Jesus was empowered to follow his path and although he needed support from his heavenly Father the end was never in doubt.

OPPORTUNITY MAY KNOCK ONLY ONCE, BUT TEMPTATION LEANS ON THE DOORBELL.

We are unlikely to be tempted in exactly the same way as Jesus was, but every one of us will be tested at the point which matter most in their life and vocation. It is a central part of the of Christian life to learn to recognise the voices that whisper attractive lies, to distinguish them from the voice of God and to use the simple but direct weapons provided in scripture to rebut those lies with truth.

The temptations we face are often difficult to recognise, the choice is not between good and bad but between bad or worse or good and better. We often deal with grey areas. Although the temptation story does not offer ethical instruction that cover every eventuality it does describe the perennial ethical choices that Christians face: the temptation to forget our identity in the Lord, to attempt to use our religion for personal gain or to try to be successful rather than faithful, to be dazzled by materialism to make compromises where we are called to stand firm and to avoid sacrifice and suffering.



The discipline of fighting temptation is not about self-abuse or rejecting parts of our God given humanity. It is about seeing God's gift of full humanity and discovering how to use it to its full potential. At the heart of our resistance to temptation is love and loyalty to God who has called us his beloved children in Christ and who calls us to follow him in the path which leads to true glory.

The call is not to adherence to a list of rules and regulations but to faithfulness to the call and purposes of God.