



**Call:** Rejoice in the Lord, for he calls us to be honest with him, offering his forgiveness, to teach us the way to go as we make our choices. Let us walk with him in faith.

**Let us pray:** Lord Jesus, you know that life can be complicated. You faced tough choices but chose to be true to your father, God. By your Holy Spirit, instruct and guide us that we will be able to know what is good and true. Amen

**Hymn:** STF 333 Majesty, worship his majesty      Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALZsqstQpFA>

*Majesty, worship His Majesty: Unto Jesus be all glory, honour, and praise.*

*Majesty, kingdom authority, Flow from His throne unto His own, His anthems raise.*

*So exalt, lift up on high the name of Jesus.*

*Magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus, the King.*

*Majesty, worship His Majesty, Jesus who died, now glorified, King of all Kings.*

**Prayer of Adoration:** Gracious and merciful God, on this first Sunday in Lent we come to worship you, to praise and thank you, to seek your forgiveness and to ask for renewal. We come in the name of Christ, remembering his lonely days in the wilderness, his time wrestling with temptation, and the ministry that followed, restoring and transforming so many lives. Help us to learn from his example, to search our hearts as he did, to consider our calling, to reflect on our faith, to resist temptation, and to commit ourselves more wholly to you. Help us to recognise all that Jesus has done for us through his life, death and resurrection; and so may we come gladly to you, confessing our sins, acknowledging our faults, accepting our weaknesses, and receiving your forgiveness. Gracious and merciful God, speak to us today and in the days ahead, so that we may know you and love you better. Create in us a clean heart, O Lord, and put a right spirit within us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

**Prayer of confession** (Ps 32 paraphrase © Bob Hartman/engageworship.org.uk )

When the thing you've done wrong is forgiven, when your sin is hidden away, like it never existed, you're happy. When God himself declares that you are innocent and free of guilt, and when there's no longer any need to pretend, you're happy. So why does it take me so long to admit it, when I have done something wrong? Why do I put myself through all that pain? Because it was painful, Lord. It really was. It was like carrying a heavy burden. It was like a sweltering summer day followed by an even more sweltering night. No relief, none at all, from the heat. But when I finally confessed, when I owned up to the thing I'd done, then everything changed. You forgave me. Simple as that. And that is why those who trust in you offer their prayers to you. Because when the flood wants to wash them away, you are there to lift them up out of the waters. And when it looks like there is no longer any refuge, you are my hiding place. And when trouble is all around, you surround me with the sound of your voice. "I am here. Here to help. Have no fear". So listen to me, and I'll show you the way you should go. I'll keep my eye on you, and teach you, step by step. As long as you're willing to be taught, that is, and not like a horse or a mule that needs a bit in its mouth to force it along the right path. For the wicked, they suffer for their sins. Tormented. Alone. Don't let anyone kid you. But those who trust in the Lord live in his presence, surrounded by his love - a love that never quits. So be happy, righteous ones. Rejoice! And those of you whose hearts are in tune with God, shout. Shout for joy!

**Hymn:** STF 467 I need thee, O I need thee      Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZIMDcgrF-Q>

I need Thee every hour,  
most gracious Lord:  
no tender voice like Thine  
can peace afford.

*I need Thee, O I need Thee!*  
*every hour I need Thee;*  
*O bless me now, my Saviour!*  
*I come to Thee.*

I need Thee every hour,

stay Thou near by;  
temptations lose their power  
when Thou art nigh. *Chorus*

I need Thee every hour,  
in joy or pain;  
come quickly and abide,  
or life is vain. *Chorus*

I need Thee every hour,  
teach me Thy will;  
and Thy rich promises  
in me fulfil. *Chorus*

I need thee every hour,  
most Holy One;  
O make me Thine indeed.  
Thou blessed Son

**Readings: Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7** The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

**Matthew 4:1-11** Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is also 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. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

**Hymn:** STF 238 Lead us, heavenly Father lead us <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpkEeXWtWg0>

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us o'er the world's tempestuous sea; guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us for we have no help but thee; yet possessing every blessing, if our God our Father be.	Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us; all our weakness thou dost know; thou didst tread this earth before us, thou didst feel its keenest woe; tempted, taunted, yet undaunted, through the desert thou didst go.	Spirit of our God, descending, fill our hearts with heavenly joy, love with every passion blending, pleasure that can never cloy: thus provided, pardoned, guided, nothing can our peace destroy.
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James Edmeston (1791-1867) Used By Permission.

**Message:** "Living with temptation"

Who do you believe? The BBC is facing \$billion lawsuit for giving false information about what Donald Trump said on 6th January 2021, Peter Mandelson lied to Keir Starmer over his links with Jeffrey Epstein, Boris Johnson and "partygate." I could go on. "All politicians are in it for what they can get out of it". "They're all the same," are cries we often hear.

I am sure that most, and would hope that all, politicians enter politics for the right reason, but how often do those altruistic ideals get eroded away?

Both our bible readings today are about temptation and choices. Our politicians, and we, all face temptation and choices every day of our lives. It's part of being human. It's something Adam and Eve faced, and it's something Jesus himself faced, but with very different outcomes. In each case, however, there are common features.

**1.** Temptation comes at specific times, not by accident. It comes as a consequence of circumstance. It may be at a time of vulnerability – Jesus had been fasting for 40 days and nights. He was alone. He was in a desolate place. It may come at a time when we are off our guard, when times are good, when we are on a high – Eve was tempted by the serpent in the garden of Eden, where food was in abundance and everything was perfect, but after Adam had been commanded not to eat from this one tree. Jesus had only just recently received that affirmation from God as "this is my only Son, the one that I love." When are you most frequently tempted?

2. Although temptation may have outward manifestations, it is a response to our own inner thoughts and desires. Eve probably thought to herself, surely eating food that is good and will give me wisdom cannot be a bad thing? Jesus was no doubt hungry and thirsty; he would have had a very real desire for bread and water.

We may have very justifiable desires, but how do we respond, like Adam and Eve or like Jesus?

3. Temptation is rarely a one off. Eve may have only once been tempted by the serpent, but she then tempted Adam, and as a consequence both their sins affected the whole world. The consequences of giving in to temptation multiply, sin spreads.

Jesus faced temptation more than once. He faced up to Satan here in the wilderness at the beginning of his ministry. He came across him again, in the guise of one of his most loyal disciples, when Peter rebuked him for suggesting he would have to face the cross. And then Satan appeared again, right at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry when he was mocked by the high priests and crowds and then, again, as he hung on the cross. "If you are the Son of God, then save yourself!"

We might think we have given into temptation once, perhaps "nothing too serious." We might think we can hide it, but sadly all too often, that error is found out eventually and others are dragged in and affected by our wrongdoing. Like Jesus, we will face temptation again and again.

Temptation usually plays to our gifts. Eve gave in to the serpent's temptation because he portrayed God as stingy, strict, and selfish. He made her focus on God as a God of "do nots" rather than a God of rich and abundant blessings. The serpent made Eve believe that once she knew what was good and evil, she would have no need of God, she would be able to decide for herself what was best for her.

When Jesus was tempted, Satan tried to exploit Jesus' supernatural power. Jesus could have turned stones into bread – he did later turn water into wine. However, this would have simply meant that by giving in to our desires for more and more possessions we might think we can buy our way into God's heart.

Jesus would have been saved by angels if he had given in to Satan's temptation to jump from the top of the temple. But these would have been spectacular stunts, designed simply to test God. If we solely depend on stunts and signs to have faith, then we will be disappointed because today's stunt becomes tomorrow's everyday action. Our faith is simply doubt looking for proof.

What are your strengths and gifts that you might be tempted to exploit? Surely, we are told to use our gifts and talents?

Bishop Tom Wright describes temptation as a "distortion of our true vocation that beckons seductively."

When we think of those politicians that have fallen so spectacularly from a great height, we might point the finger and recognise how their vocation as a servant of the people has been so grotesquely distorted. But what of ourselves? We all are tempted, at times of vulnerability and at the heights of success. Are we like Adam and Eve, where our giving in to temptation has consequences not only for ourselves, but also others?

What is our vocation, and where are the whispering voices that try to distort that vocation?

Do we try to buy our way into God's affection? Do we look for signs and wonders, or put our faith and trust in God?

Do we compromise, do we give in, just a little bit? Jesus never compromised, even at the "eleventh hour", he accepted that path to the cross. Jesus knew his Father and trusted him fully; he had no need to test him. Jesus was able to put his human desires to one side, his physical hunger, to demonstrate how he came as a servant to others, and not to himself.

Jesus' vocation was to be truly human, and he did so by facing temptation. He came to be a servant of the world, and he did so by turning his back on Satan, and his own human desires. And he came to be God's Son, whom he loved, by putting his human self aside and taking the path to the cross and ultimate victory over all evil. In Romans 5 Paul writes that the sin of one man, Adam, led to death, however the righteous act of One – Jesus, leads to new life for all.

**Let us pray:** Lord Jesus Christ, you came to earth in human form, you were tempted at your lowest and your highest points, yet you demonstrated to us all how temptation happens to us all, but how we can resist that temptation. You came as God's beloved Son, a servant to the world, who came to put right the consequences of all our sins since the fall of Adam and Eve, through your one selfless act of righteousness, as you died on that cross, so that we might gain the victory of life over death after you rose victorious from death on that cross. Thank you, Jesus. Amen

**Hymn:** STF 531 What a friend we have in Jesus      Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAYAxdvvgGU>

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer! O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!	Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer! Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer!	Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care? Precious Savior, still our refuge-- take it to the Lord in prayer! Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer! In his arms he'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.
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**Prayers of Intercession:** Our God knows us and the temptations we face. Let us come to him now in prayer.

As the Church begins this season of Lent we ask you to remind us of what is important and what is not; of where we are wandering away and what we need to change, so that by Easter we will be renewed and strengthened for your service in the world. In the wilderness of life today, **be present , O Lord.**

The world's misery and pain and desperate need of healing are clear to see and affect us all. We pray for this damaged world with all its weakness, longings and failings, with all its potential and hope. In the wilderness of life today, **be present , O Lord.**

We pray for all who suffer through the sins of others; all victims of abuse or oppression or apathy; all whose lives are distorted or misshapen by early damaging experiences which need your healing. We pray for any known to us at this times in particular need of prayer. In the wilderness of life today, **be present , O Lord.**

We remember those who, freed from the ageing and pain of their bodies, can now live with you in the peace and joy of heaven. In the wilderness of life today, **be present , O Lord.**

Lord, we give you thanks and praise for the hope we have in Jesus; for strength to resist temptation and the wisdom to make the right choices in life; and for the joy and relief of forgiveness when we fall. In the wilderness of life today, **be present , O Lord.**

Merciful Father, accept these prayers in the name of Jesus. Amen

**Hymn:** STF 563 O Jesus I have promised      Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pmGPFvm5VQ>

O Jesus, I have promised to serve thee to the end; be thou for ever near me, my Master and my Friend: I shall not fear the battle if thou art by my side, nor wander from the pathway if thou wilt be my guide.	O let me hear thee speaking in accents clear and still, above the storms of passion, the murmurs of self-will; O speak to reassure me, to hasten or control; O speak, and make me listen, thou guardian of my soul.
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O let me feel thee near me: the world is ever near; I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear; my foes are ever near me, around me, and within; but, Jesus, draw thou nearer, and shield my soul from sin.	O Jesus, thou hast promised to all who follow thee, that where thou art in glory there shall thy servant be; and, Jesus, I have promised to serve thee to the end: O give me grace to follow, my Master and my Friend.
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**Blessing:** Loving God, as your Son lived in obedience to you, make us watchful for your will; so may the blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, be upon each one of us and remain with us, now and always. Amen