

The Temptations of Christ

For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.
(Ps 139)

The Book of Common Prayer extends a 3 fold invitation to observe Lent
"by self examination and repentance
By prayer, fasting, and self denial, and
By reading and meditating on Gods holy Word"

Mark 4: 1-11

THEN JESUS WAS led by the Spirit into the desert 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 does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

- "If you are the Son of God"-challenge to Jesus identity. Are you really who they say you are? Then prove it.
- why suffer? Turn these stones to bread and satisfy yourself

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.'

- the temptation to be spectacular, to do something to win applause and popularity.

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.⁹"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.

- the temptation to be powerful. why renounce wealth and power?
- to use political, economic, physical or spiritual might as instruments to promote yourself

They were the temptations, but how did Jesus overcome them?

He said "it is written", but not just from anywhere....from Deut – the story of Israel in the desert for 40 years....

Read Deut chapters 6 and 8

"Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that people do not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (Deut 8:2-3)

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil (temptation) comes, you may be able to stand your ground...take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one, take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph 6:13-17)

Jesus says no to every voice that diverts him from the path that God has chosen for him

Loneliness, challenges, temptation have the ability to reveal what's 'in our heart.' Allow the Lord to search your heart over this period of time to see if there is any 'wicked way in you.' Come to the Cross, to receive forgiveness, healing and grace (God's enabling Presence) to be who we are called to be.

Questions:

1. What is your greatest temptation?
 - a. To avoid suffering? To prove yourself?
 - b. To be spectacular- to do something to win applause and popularity?
 - c. To be powerful, promoting yourself through political, physical, spiritual etc instruments?
 - d. What else?
2. Where (to whom, or to what) do you look for security (love, acceptance, belonging)?
3. Where (to whom, or to what) do you turn when you are lonely or life seems difficult? Can you think of any examples?
4. What do you think it means to have our security in Jesus Christ? What could this look like for you?
5. What is your greatest distraction' that keeps you from serving the Lord your God?
6. in this period leading up to Easter:
 - a. what disciplines could you build into your life- Scripture reading/ meditation; penitence; prayer; fasting; abstinence; giving; acts of service?