



# First Sunday of Lent

## Sermon by Revd David Edwards



Sunday 26 February 2023

### READINGS

Genesis 2: 15-17; 3:1-7; Psalm 32; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

## *Temptation*

We all know all about Temptation; we have all at some stage succumbed to it. From today's Gospel reading we see that Jesus himself was tempted. Temptation is always the subject of the First Sunday in lent because it is a critical part of our understanding of what leads us into sin. The sin for which our Lord redeemed us by his death on the cross.

Temptation is the desire to do something, especially something wrong or unwise. Temptation is the test of a person's ability to choose good instead of evil. Synonyms of temptation: Alluring, Enticing, Trap, Snare. We are surrounded by temptation all the time. In what people say to us, peer pressure, what advertisers say to us, what the media says. But temptation gives us an opportunity to grow. Temptation provides us with the choice. every time we choose to do good, we are growing. Every Temptation is an opportunity to do good, rather than submit to Temptation, we are growing in the character of Christ. Character development always involves a choice, and temptation provides that opportunity. Our Character grows every time we defeat temptation.

In Galatians 5: 21,22 we read

*"The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God"*

That is a warning from Paul of what happens when we submit to temptation, and it lists a whole lot of the sin which so often emerges from sin. Our character grows each time we are tempted by one of those, but instead choose to do the opposite, which is God's way. Our integrity grows when we defeat the Temptation to be dishonest. Our endurance grows when we overcome the Temptation to give up; our patience grows when we're forced to wait and decline to become angry. Note the pattern of temptation. We see it in the bible with Adam and Eve , with Jesus in the wilderness, it begins with desire.

James 4:1: *"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?"*

We doubt. Is it really wrong? Doesn't God want me to be happy? The comes deception. Satan the father of lies. The excuses we make: Who will ever know? It's only a little sin. Who's it really hurting? "Everyone is doing it"

This is followed by disobedience, and we finally give in. We finally believe the lies we have heard.

All of us know however closely we follow Christ, are still under attack. Evil knows our weaknesses. We will have trials and temptations. These are attempts by the devil to get us to live our lives independently of God. He tried to take Jesus from his core identity – to turn stone into food. So we cling to feeling that some person thing or event will come along and finally give me that inner well-being I crave? A new idea, training course, new job, new wife, new country?

We overcome the temptation by beginning to recognise that Temptation is not a sin. *“This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testing we do, yet he did not sin”*. (Hebrews 4:15, NLT)

How do we overcome temptation:

**Control** our own thoughts, words and actions. Do not allow yourself to be intimidated. Do not feel ashamed to have been Tempted – even Jesus was. Temptation is a compliment. The closer we are to God, the more likely the evils of temptation are to try to trip us up.

**Pray** Ps 50:15 "Call on me in your hour of trouble" The devil fears your prayers and will try to stop them

**Recognise the pattern.** Where were you when tempted? When are you tempted? With whom are you with when you are tempted? Avoid these situations and people if you can.

It is a predictable process, with Adam and Eve, with Jesus, and with us. We must remember that temptation is an opportunity to grow. A stepping stone, not a stumbling block. Character growth needs a choice. Temptation provides that opportunity. When we feel temptation we need to refocus your attention elsewhere. Resistance doesn't really work – it only intensifies our focus on the wrong thing. Walk away from temptation. Run if necessary

Continue to prayer. Memorise comforting Bible verses. So remember we are all tempted. There is no sin in temptation. We cannot defeat temptations with our own power. As we co-operate with God in doing His will, Self-control is a natural by-product. Developing Self-control in our lives is essential to defeat the temptations that will come our way.

- Without overcoming temptation, before they become sin. we cannot grow in Christ.
- Without Temptation fruit will not grow.
- With Christ we have the assurance of forgiveness.
- With Christ we are free from the dominion of sin.