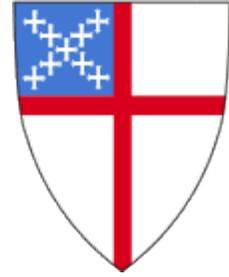


The Lessons Appointed for Use on the
First Sunday in Lent

Year A
RCL



- [Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7](#)
- [Romans 5:12-19](#)
- [Matthew 4:1-11](#)
- [Psalm 32](#)

Temptation. It's all around, and has been forever. First of all, Adam and Eve succumbed to disobedience by tasting of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. It was this knowledge that differentiated God and humans. In the very beginning, humans were obedient to God in the Garden. They were given all they needed, and more. God provided extravagantly for them. There was no hunger, or sickness, or death. And God enjoyed their company, walking with them in the Garden. Their relationship was loving, filled with intimate knowledge of each other, and many shared experiences.

Even after their act of disobedience, God showed his love and caring for them. He provided them with clothing to protect them from the dangers of the world outside the Garden. Despite their sin, God still held them close. Despite their being expelled from the Garden, God continued to love them and provide for

them. Even then, he wanted them, and us, back in close relationship just as any loving parent strives to maintain closeness and respect. But as Humanity entered into something that seems akin to adolescence, the temptation of the forbidden became over powering.

We are tempted, every day, as humans. We seem to be able to hold out for just so long. So often, just like Adam and Eve, we are convinced by our own serpents that what we want is okay for us to take. It takes practice to resist temptation, and Lent gives us the chance to practice!

Jesus, after spending forty days and forty nights in the wilderness, must have been famished, and weary, yet filled with inspiration and the power of the Holy Spirit. So, he was ready for Satan's temptation. Jesus responded to Satan's challenge to make stones into bread to satisfy his hunger. Jesus surely knew he could do that; he didn't need Satan to tell him. He chose to remain obedient to God. One does not live by bread alone.

Then, placed on the top of the temple, Satan again tells Jesus he can throw himself from the height, and angels will keep him from falling to his death. Jesus response is that he did not need to put God to the test. His faith accepted his place as God's son.

The last temptation of Jesus in this story, has Satan promising to give to Jesus power over the world, all He has to do is worship Satan. But Jesus holds firm. He refuses to worship any other being. Love and worship only God. There is no other. We are reminded that Jesus was tempted in every way as we are, yet he did not sin.

This lesson teaches us that we too can resist temptation, with God's help. We have to reach out to God, and accept our human weakness, lean heavily on God and let Him carry us away from sin.

It's a little bit of human pride that makes us believe that we can do this on our own. We really don't need God, were tough, we can do this. But we really can't.

The twelve step programs that help those with addictions start with the recognition of a higher power, and our own powerlessness to walk away from our addiction without the help of that higher power.

Each of us has a personal weakness. I often say I have lots of will power, I will eat that thing I should not, I will have another piece of cake or candy; I just don't have any won't power. It's difficult to just say no.

For that reason, if no other, the story of Jesus defining himself with strength and discipline is inspiring. Jesus said no to all the temptations voiced by Satan. He

knew he could turn stones into bread, he could throw himself from the temple height and have a very public scene as the angels brought him safely down, and He could claim the kingdoms offered by Satan. But he was not meant to be an earthly king, bound by temporal limitations. Throughout his ministry, Jesus was offered opportunities to be crowned King of the Jews. He could have joined with, and led, insurgents against Rome. But that was not who he was and is. His kingdom is of heaven, and eternity.

Just as He knew Satan had no power over Him, He knew that death had no power over him either. Despite the desire for Him to comply with the image humanity had in mind for the messiah, Jesus knew that it was up to Him to bring us back into the Garden. To bring us back to intimacy with God.

We are once again offered walks in the garden in the evening, in the presence of God. It means we have to open ourselves to his presence. To study his work, and listen for his voice. To listen for God in the silence. To wait on the Lord.

We cannot give back the forbidden fruit, but we can work to be obedient now.

Paul talks of death coming from the act of one man. And reconciliation, redemption, coming from the act of one man, Christ. Through His example, throughout his ministry, Jesus gave us the way to turn from the sins of this world,

and return to closeness with God. He reminded us of the Good News, God loves us, and wants us to be in relationship with him.

We are reminded not of what we can do “for” God, not to highlight our repentance, but to celebrate all that God has done for us. We are called to open our hearts, and our minds, to welcome God into the depths of our being. To taste and see the goodness that the Lord has provided for us.

Cleansed from sin. Free from shame and guilt – no longer naked and afraid in the Garden, but clothed in the Love of Christ. Able to come when God calls us by name, called back into relationship as children of Light.

Amen