

Sunday, 26th February , 2023

Take temptation seriously

Materials from Roots Bible Study

Begin with an opening prayer

Jesus Christ, our wonderful Lord and Saviour,
who when tempted in the desert, resisted,
in the world, but not of the world:
we worship and adore you.

When tempted by bread, you chose the word of God.

When tempted to be spectacular, you chose humility.

When tempted by riches and power, you chose servanthood.

Lord Jesus Christ, we worship and adore you.

Amen.

Read : Matthew 4. 1-11

Bible notes

Three times Jesus speaks, saying 'it is written' and quoting Deuteronomy, which is presented as Moses' words to Israel 'in the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month' of Israel's journey through the wilderness (Deuteronomy 1.3). In Matthew, Jesus is tested at the end of his 40 days, suggesting that in drawing on Deuteronomy he is sharing the wisdom gained by Israel from 40 years in the desert. And the devil's 'If you are the Son of God' reminds us of Hosea 11.1, 'out of Egypt I called my son', explicitly related to Jesus in Matthew 2.15. After complaining, Israel was sustained with manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16), but by fasting Jesus has learned for himself that he is fed by the word of God (Deuteronomy 8.3). Israel demanded water, fearing they were abandoned by God, and Moses was commanded to strike the rock, but 'He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarrelled and tested the Lord' (Exodus 17.1-7). But Jesus will not jump from the Temple and put his God to the test (Deuteronomy 6.12) because he is confident in his Father's love. Anxious because Moses, their spokesman for God, was slow to come down from God's mountain, and grumbling that 'we do not know what has become of him', Israel made a golden calf to worship (Exodus 32). But, transported to 'a very high mountain', Jesus remembers the God who had called him 'my beloved Son' at his baptism, and he affirms with Moses, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him' (Deuteronomy 6.13).

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

In her BBC Radio 4 series, *Consumed by Desire*, the psychotherapist Philippa Perry pointed out that nowadays we get what we want, easily and instantly, whether strawberries in January, an Uber car, or constant connection via the digital world. Of course, this is not true for the many, here and throughout the world, who struggle even to subsist. But for those for whom the gap between urge and fulfilment can be very short, it may be difficult to acknowledge our real needs or to understand our deepest desires. Taking time to face his temptations, Jesus was able to separate what he did not really want from what he most deeply desired.

A prayer of thanksgiving

Thank you, Lord, that it is never too late to turn around, never too late to start again.

Thank you that you have pulled us out of darkness into your marvellous light.

Thank you that though we are tempted, though we get things wrong, by your grace we are healed and restored.

Thank you that we are precious to you, that we know whose we are – we belong to you.

Thank you that your love for us is unconditional, we don't have to prove anything.

And thank you that when we are tempted by the offerings of this world, you are there to pick us up, wipe off the dust and set us back on the right path.

Thank you for the amazing love that you offer to each one of us.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Let us go forth with the love of God surrounding us.

Let us go forth with the wisdom of God guiding us.

Let us go forth with our trust in God protecting us.

Amen.