

Prepared Sermon on Sunday 9 March 2025 Lent 1, Year C

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The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread. Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone.'" country. (Luke 4:3-4)

Welcome to the Lenten journey. For the next six Sundays, we walk with Jesus from Galilee to the coast, over the mountains, and to Jerusalem. On this journey, we reflect on everything that happened to Jesus. In his encounters with others, Jesus had moments of joy and sorrow, strength and struggle, and humiliation and glory. Therefore, our Lenten journey is a wonderful opportunity to learn and practise his teaching, which enables us to proclaim the Good News of Salvation.

Today, we read the well-known episode, The Temptation in the Wilderness. Let me point out the little tibia before exploring the depth of the message from this Gospel. The Temptation episode is shared by all three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Interestingly, each Gospel had a slightly different description. Mark, which we had last year, writes about this event very briefly. He does not mention the three temptations of bread, power, and testing. He writes most simply, saying he was in the wilderness and tested by Satan. (Mark 1:13) Meanwhile, Matthew writes similarly to Luke, but the three temptations are lined up differently. As we read Luke's version, the three temptations and Jeuss' responses are written in the order of Food, Power (and wealth), and Testing God. Matthew says the Temptation's order is Bread, Testing God, and Power. This is a little trivia for you, and I do not intend to present academic research and analysis on comparing synoptic accounts. So we look at Luke's version today, temptations of Food, Power, and Testing.

The three temptations entice our needs and desires. When we are hungry, we need to fill our stomachs. Imagine that your day gets so busy that you face never-ending requirements. You are working so hard at your regular lunchtime that you cannot afford to stop the job.

So you are forced to continue working, and then something else unexpectedly comes up on your job list. Inevitably you delay your lunch, but you get so hungry. What, then, would occupy your mind? Food, of course. Not long ago, I was driving back home in the evening. Two things occupied my mind. Food and kangaroos! Going through a distance of over 100 km, I kept my eyes on the road, as I did not want to see kangaroos hopping towards me. At the same time, my mind was occupied with searching for restaurants in the next town. 'Burger shop? KFC? Or Service Stations? What else can I do at this time of the evening?

I don't want to stay long because I want to go home as quickly as possible.' Did I have time to reflect upon the ministry I was involved in the day? I must confess that I did not! I do not call this 'been tempted', but it explains our thinking mechanism under such circumstances.

Nevertheless, the Word of God rules over us even when our minds are occupied with food. Through his teaching and guidance, we maintain our common sense. Have I ever considered stopping at the next farmhouse and knocking on the doors to ask for food instead of driving to buy my food from the shop? Definitely, I haven't. We call that our common sense, but based on common sense, God's teaching of doing good lies firmly. So we confidently take the Word of Jesus to the Tempter.' "One does not live by bread alone." (Luke v4:4)

The second and the third temptations are challenging to our desire. The Temptation to gain power and wealth in return for apostasies against God is the challenge to our desire to attempt to be almighty. In today's world, we live in a culture that pursues the value and meaning of life in materialistic richness and domination by power. Society appears to shift the value and paradigm from God and his love to something else, from which quick results satisfy our desires. To us who are deeply concerned about the climate of the current world, Jesus strongly empowers us by assuring us the true value of his Word by which we continue growing in faith.

As we reflect on these three temptations, how does this impact our daily lives? I would like you to think about three essential matters in your daily life. (You don't have to tell us what they are.) Then I would like you to choose one of them as your priority.

Hard to pick one because all three are equally important for you? Modern research and surveys on the value of human life say that family matters are at the top of people's priorities. As we often hear this phrase, 'the family first.' we consider maintaining the peace and stability of our family. Therefore, everything that we do relates to the family matters. How much time do we allocate to us for the family? Many of us would answer a lot!'. Then, we select the matters essential for the family, attempting to avoid anything else that can disturb us. Think about your busy December time schedule. We spend much time decorating our homes, buying presents, cooking for family Christmas meals, and perhaps participating in church or community events. Especially for non-Christian people, Christmas is all about the family; some of them do not even know why we celebrate Christmas!

How much do we allocate our time to be with God? No matter what we select for our priority in life, are we conscious that God is with us in the middle of our activities? It is quite alright to say, 'Family takes 90 per cent, and God ten per cent.' As long as we acknowledge his presence and guidance, even though we see him in a small percentage, we must realise that he never leaves alone. Jesus was alone in the wilderness, testing him, but God never left him completely desolate. Jesus had never disputed the presence of his Father in heaven. Thus, he confidently replied to the Tempter, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." (4:12)

My dear friends, let us see his example as an encouragement to our faith journey with him. He says to you, 'It's ok to acknowledge me only in a small scaler in your mind because I will not leave you alone, and I will take everything that bothers you to lift you up. Have a fruitful and graceful Lent.