

First Sunday of Lent (a)

OPENING PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, your Son battled with the powers of darkness, and grew closer to you in the desert: help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer that we may witness to your saving love in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans 5:12-19

Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned – sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgement following one trespass brought condemnation but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so the act of righteousness of one leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one person's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL Matthew 4:1-11

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."' "

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you," and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."' "

Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."' "

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."' "

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

What Is Lent?

— A Biblical Explanation

Lent is not a Church invention to make life harder. It is a season rooted in Scripture. Before he began his public ministry, Jesus fasted forty days in the wilderness. He faced temptation. He chose obedience. The Church follows him into that pattern.

In the Bible, forty days and forty years mark a time of testing and preparation. Israel walked in the desert before entering the promised land. Moses fasted on the mountain before receiving the law. Lent places us in that same school.

We keep Lent because sin is real. Romans speaks of Adam, whose disobedience brought death. Lent is the season when we face that truth honestly. We examine our lives. We repent. We turn again toward God. Fasting, prayer and generosity are not religious exercises to impress others. They train the heart. When we give something up, we learn that we do not live

by bread alone. When we pray more seriously, we learn dependence. When we give to others, we break selfish habits.

Lent is not about self-punishment. It is preparation for Easter. We walk with Christ through testing so that we may rejoice with him in resurrection. It is a time to return, to reorder life, and to choose obedience again.

— A Theological Reflection

The Gospel shows Jesus led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Temptation does not mean God has abandoned him. It is the place where obedience is tested. The devil tempts Jesus in three ways: to use power for himself, to force God's protection, and to gain authority without the cross. Each temptation offers a shortcut. Jesus refuses every shortcut. He answers with Scripture. He worships God alone.

Paul explains why this matters. Adam's disobedience brought condemnation. Christ's obedience brings life. The wilderness is not a private struggle; it is the beginning of a new humanity. Where Adam failed, Christ stands firm.

Lent therefore is not about proving ourselves strong. It is about learning to stand with Christ. We face temptation not alone but within his victory. Obedience is possible because grace has already been given.

The desert is not the end. Angels come and minister to him. The one who resists evil will walk toward the cross and then toward resurrection. Lent begins in struggle, but it ends in life.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS:

God of the desert, as we follow Jesus into the unknown, may we recognise the tempter when he comes; let it be your bread we eat, your world we serve and you alone we worship; we ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COMMUNION SENTENCE:

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled. Matthew 5:6

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION:

Lord God, you have renewed us with the living bread from heaven; by it you nourish our faith, increase our hope, and strengthen our love: teach us always to hunger for him who is the true and living bread, and enable us to live by every word that proceeds from out of your mouth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**