

Worship at Home – 9th March 2025 (1st Sunday in Lent)

A short act of worship for use in people's homes prepared by Rachel Borgars.

Call to worship

Loving God, we gather penitently in your name to seek renewal –

We gather joyfully in your name to worship you –

We gather full of hope, seeking your help and guidance –

We gather because we love you and we want to worship you –

May we worship with expectation, openness, receptiveness and sincerity, in the name of Christ.

Amen

Hymn – SOT 9 – A time for Lent, a time to mine Arthur J Lewis (1914–1991)

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| 1 | A time for Lent, a time to mine
A deeper seam of grace,
To leave the outer walls of faith
And seek the Saviour's face. | 2 | Full in His face such glory shines
As will all duty charm
And free the timid soul from fear
And every false alarm. |
| 3 | Within His gaze our wills take shape
No more with struggling grind
But with a joy that thrills the heart
And elevates the mind. | 4 | When Christ is very near within
And walks with you and me,
Then comes a dignity serene
In pure simplicity. |

Opening prayers

Author of Life, we offer you our praise.

In you we live and breathe and have our being.

In you we find protection, because you are faithful and loving.

In you we find guidance, because you are wise and all-knowing.

In you we find strength, because you are fortress and refuge.

We praise you for all that you have been to us and to our world.

We praise you for all that you are to us and to our world.

We praise you for all that you will be to us and to our world. **Amen**

God of compassion and mercy,

we are sorry that sometimes we put ourselves ahead of you;
that we ignore your values of meekness and humility and seek
power and position;

that we use what we have selfishly, without thought for its
impact on others;

that we take refuge in security and familiarity when you call us
to step out of our comfort zone.

Forgive us. Envision us. Heal us.

Empower us to be kind and courageous, godly and generous,
self-aware and self-giving.

In the name of Jesus, we pray. **Amen**

Bible reading – Luke 4:1-13

Jesus Is Tempted in the Desert

4 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan River. The Spirit led him into the desert. **2** There the devil tempted him for 40 days. Jesus ate nothing during that time. At the end of the 40 days, he was hungry.

³ The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”

⁴ Jesus answered, “It is written, ‘Man must not live only on bread.’”

⁵ Then the devil led Jesus up to a high place. In an instant, he showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ He said to Jesus, “I will give you all their authority and glory. It has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷ If you worship me, it will all be yours.”

⁸ Jesus answered, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God. He is the only one you should serve.’”

⁹ Then the devil led Jesus to Jerusalem. He had Jesus stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰ It is written,

“The Lord will command his angels to take good care of you.

¹¹ They will lift you up in their hands.

Then you won’t trip over a stone.”

¹² Jesus answered, “Scripture says, ‘Do not test the Lord your God.’”

¹³ When the devil finished all this tempting, he left Jesus until a better time.

Hymn – STF 236 – Forty days and forty nights George H Smyttan (1822-1870)

1 Forty days and forty nights
you were fasting in the wild;
forty days and forty nights
tempted and yet undefiled.

2 Burning heat throughout the day,
bitter cold when light had fled;
prowling beasts around your way,
stones your pillow, earth your bed.

3 Shall not we your trials share,
learn your discipline of will;
and with you by fast and prayer
wrestle with the powers of hell?

4 So if Satan, pressing hard,
soul and body would destroy:
Christ who conquered, be our guard;
give to us the victor's joy.

5 Saviour, may we hear your voice;
keep us constant at your side;
and with you we shall rejoice
at the eternal Eastertide.

Reflection on the reading (Wilderness: Land of Plenty)

The reading that we have heard from Luke’s gospel is probably pretty familiar, as are the three temptations that are offered to Jesus that he rejects with powerful words of Scripture. The temptations to feed the world; to hold all authority in the world, if Jesus will just shift the focus of his worship and to test God as to whether Jesus would be saved from disaster.

Over the years many parallels have been drawn with those, who in contemporary times are seeking to avoid temptation. Some are the same as those described by Luke and others which have become part of life through the ages and scientific (and other) discoveries. Too often those who are in the midst of deep battles are told, “All you have to do is know your Bible and pray...”

But it’s just not that simple. Even though the temptations may not be as obvious as those put before Jesus, we still have our own temptations to face, and I think they are getting more sneaky and subtle as time goes on.

Because of the setting of the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, it is often seen as a place to be avoided, a place of meagre rations, extremes of climate, where if we are blessed, angels will minister to us in our need.

The final verse of the reading in *The Message* translation reads as follows: “The Devil retreated temporarily, lying in wait for another opportunity”

This translation raises some questions for me. Is the wilderness the only place that we come face to face with temptation? And, given that our Circuit and our local churches are not located in a desert, what does a wilderness look like to us? Or is it perhaps that the experience of temptation (wherever it occurs) makes a wilderness of that situation?

And why is it that the wilderness gets such a bad press?

Just think for a moment if you will

- In the wilderness, there is little distraction, little that we need to “give up”
- In the wilderness, one has to be prepared in order to survive
- In the wilderness, one may either need to rely on the hospitality of strangers or to offer hospitality to others in need.

And I just wonder against that background, could the wilderness be a positive place to go? To spend time in the company of God, who is everywhere, and in doing so, deepen our relationship with God? Could the imagery that we are used to around wilderness be changed? And where is the place of oasis in our imagery?

I’m just wondering whether the wilderness could become not a place of non-Conformist abstinence and self-denial, but a place of rich encounters and ‘time out’ with God... A time to reflect and spend time with God listening for the still small voice that is often crowded out in our daily lives.

And that offers us a different slant on Lent – still the discipline for that’s no bad thing but a joyful obedience rather than a grudging observance.

So, in this Lenten season, may you find your wilderness to be a place of plenteousness, where you can be equipped with such good things that the opportunities for temptation cease to present themselves as we follow the way of Christ more closely.

Prayers for the world, others and ourselves

To those who exercise power,
to decision makers in politics, business and industry,
to those who have wealth,
and to all whose lives affect the lives of others:
Gracious God, **grant wisdom and compassion.**

To the vulnerable and the weak,
to those with little or nothing,
to those subject to the will of others,
and to the very young and the very old:
Gracious God, **grant wisdom and compassion.**

To us as we look at what we have,
to us as we consider what to do,
to us as we relate to the world,
and to us as we seek to be faithful to you:
Gracious God, **grant wisdom and compassion.**
In the Saviour’s name, we pray. **Amen**

You may now wish to say The Lord’s Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Hymn – STF 465 – Guide me, O thou great Jehovah William Williams (1717-1791)

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| 1 | Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore;
feed me now and evermore. | 2 | Open thou the crystal fountain
whence the healing stream shall flow;
let the fiery, cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through:
strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield;
be thou still my strength and shield. |
| | 3 | | When I tread the verge of Jordan
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side:
songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee;
I will ever give to thee. |

Blessing

Challenge us, Lord, in our giving and receiving.
Empower us, Lord, when decisions need to be made.
Accompany us, Lord, on every step of life's journey,
this week, this Lent and always. **Amen**

Bible readings from [New International Reader's Version \(NIRV\)](#)

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