

**Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit  
Service at Home 9 March 2025**

Prepared by Rev John Archer

**Introduction**

A service for the start of Lent

**Call to Worship**

Grant to those who seek you, O Lord, the gift of your kingdom, the comfort of your grace and the vision of your glory. *Book of Common Order (1562)*

**Read pray or sing StF238**

*(Lead us heavenly father lead us)*

[Lead us heavenly Father StF 238](#)

- 1 Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us  
o'er the world's tempestuous sea;  
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,  
for we have no help but thee,  
yet possessing every blessing  
if our God our Father be.
- 2 Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us;  
all our weakness thou dost know,  
thou didst tread this earth before us,  
thou didst feel its keenest woe;  
tempted, taunted, yet undaunted,  
through the desert thou didst go.
- 3 Spirit of our God, descending,  
fill our hearts with heavenly joy,  
love with every passion blending,  
pleasure that can never cloy;  
thus provided, pardoned, guided,  
nothing can our peace destroy.

*James Edmeston (1791-1867)*

**Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, on this first Sunday of Lent

we come together to worship you,  
to praise and thank you,  
to seek forgiveness and ask for renewal.

We come in the name of Christ  
remembering his lonely days in the wilderness,  
his time wrestling with temptation.

Help us to learn from his example  
to search our hearts as he did,  
to consider our calling,  
to reflect on our faith,  
to resist temptation,  
and to commit ourselves more wholly to you.  
Help us to recognise all Jesus has done for us  
through his life, death and resurrection;  
and so may we come to you  
confessing our sins,  
acknowledging our faults,  
accepting our weaknesses  
and receiving your forgiveness.  
Create in us a clean heart O Lord  
and put a right spirit within us.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord **Amen**

**Let us pray the Lord's prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

**Read Matthew 4 : 1 – 11**

**Read sing or pray Hymn StF 236**

*(40 days and 40 nights)*

[Forty Days And Forty Nights \(AD2000\) \[StF 236\]](#)

- 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 Watching, praying, struggling thus,  
victory shall be ours too;  
angels minister to us,  
as they ministered to you.

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

*George Hunt Smyttan (1822-1870)  
adapted by Jubilate Hymns*

### **Prayers for others**

Lord Jesus Christ

we thank you that you came through that time in  
the desert stronger, sure of the path you must take  
and more confident of your ability to take it.

So now we pray for those experiencing similar times  
of testing.

We pray for those facing difficult choices  
which entail pain and self sacrifice,  
which mean us letting go of cherished dreams,  
which involves facing awkward facts about  
themselves or others

We pray for those wrestling with temptation  
torn between conflicting desires,  
unsure of where they stand  
uncertain about their ability to stand firm.

In the wilderness of life today, be present Lord

We pray for the leaders of nations at this time  
particularly leaders of the USA, Russia, Ukraine,  
Europe, Israel and China  
May they be clear in judgement, able to  
understand  
the issues that face them and think of the common  
people and not just national pride or profit.

In the wilderness of life, be present Lord.  
In your name we pray  
**Amen**

### **Read sing or pray Hymn StF 431 (O the love of my Lord)**

[StF 431 video2sing](#)

1 O, the love of my Lord is the essence  
of all that I love here on earth.  
All the beauty I see he has given to me,  
and his giving is gentle as silence.

2 Every day, every hour, every moment  
has been blessed by the strength of his love.  
At the turn of each tide he is there at my side,  
and his touch is as gentle as silence.

3 There've been times when I've turned from his  
presence,  
and I've walked other paths, other ways;  
but I've called on his name in the dark of my  
shame,  
and his mercy was gentle as silence.

*Estelle White (b. 1925)*

### **Sermon**

#### Introduction

Our Lenten reading was about Jesus and temptation. I am reminded of the story of the man who died and was waiting at the Pearly Gate. St Peter comes out to greet him but looks a bit puzzled "We weren't expecting anyone just now. Wait here whilst I check your records. The man stands and waits and he notices a party going on down beneath the clouds. There is music, food, wine and laughter. I wonder where that is he thinks to himself. At that moment St Peter comes out looking puzzled. "We can't find your records at all. Sorry to keep you but I will have another look." The man gets tired of waiting and looks with envy at the fun being had below. So he eventually decides to jump down and join the party. However, he falls through the cloud and lands in front of the devil. Boiling hot, flames shooting around. The devil grins and says "Welcome to hell" "But I did not want to come here – I just wanted to join the party" "Ah" the devil replies. "I see you have come across our marketing department"

A definition of temptation is the tempter looking through the keyhole into the room where you are living. Sin is your drawing back the bolt and making it possible for him to enter. The reading is set in the context of Jesus experiencing his baptism and then going off alone into the desert - a time for him to choose his methods.

If we have a vision- how do we turn it into reality

If we have a dream – how do we make it come true.

For Jesus the choice was between mighty conqueror or patient sacrificial love. This may have been a single period in Jesus' life or a summary of a longer process of Jesus discovering his role and ministry. Temptations recurred throughout his life. At Easter we will remember Gethsemane and the temptation to give in, and then the final tempting taunt of the crowd "If you are the king of the Jews save yourself" The 'lows' in the desert followed the 'high' for Jesus at his baptism.

That is often our experience at a time when we are most vulnerable. It is often the case that soon after scoring a goal a soccer team relaxes and concedes one. Complacency, self importance and pride are the devils tools!

### The 3 Temptations

1. Turning stones into bread.

Jesus would have been desperately hungry. He was experiencing what the poor knew. God provides for his people but he rejected this path.

To use his power for his own interest would destroy his divinity

It would be bribery – people would follow for what they could get. Free gimmicks were banned. Although he fed the 5000 out of love and concern there was no attempt 'to sign people up'

**Jesus rejected a 'magic'faith**

2. Jump from the pinnacle of the Temple

This was at a corner – Solomon's Porch. A sheer drop of 450 ft to the Valley of Kedron. What a sensation!

There was no future in it – a 9 day wonder. They would want more and more sensations

It was not the way to use God's power "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" (Deut) If faith can't believe without sensations it is not a real faith

**Jesus rejected a sensational faith**

3. The mountain top view

Caesar reigned over all the territory and had power over the people. If Jesus had compromised and worshipped the devil he could have power over all the peoples. But kneeling to worship the Devil meant turning to coercion to gain the world. God in Jesus loved mankind. How was he to express that and achieve a response. Not by coercion. Jesus understood that faith grows in a person. He embraced the children, but he did not see them as 'pew fodder'. His heart went out to the rich young ruler who wanted to live a godly life, but he did not force his wealth from him. In the same way the authoritarianism of communism and the unbridled coercive freedom of capitalism have failed to bring about God's kingdom of love, justice and freedom

**Jesus rejected a coercive faith**

### **Conclusion**

The gospel writers describe Jesus going through the process of prayer, thoughtful reflection, exploring the scriptures, exploring his understanding of people and of his father God, and they put it into the shorthand of the temptations. They are the temptations we face in a modern context, but we face them knowing that with Christ we can triumph. The writer of the Hebrews said

*"For we do not have a high priest who sits unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin" Hebrews 4 : 15*

**Amen**

**Read sing or pray Hymn StF 354**

*(Jesus is the name we honour)*

[Jesus is the name we honour](#)

1 Jesus is the name we honour;

Jesus is the name we praise.

Majestic name above all other names,  
the highest heav'n and earth proclaim  
that Jesus is our God.

We will glorify,  
we will lift him high,  
we will give him honour and praise.  
We will glorify,  
we will lift him high,  
we will give him honour and praise.

2 Jesus is the name we worship;  
Jesus is the name we trust.  
He is the King above all other kings,  
let all creation stand and sing  
that Jesus is our God.

3 Jesus is the Father's splendour;  
Jesus is the Father's joy.  
He will return to reign in majesty,  
and every eye at last will see  
that Jesus is our God.

*Philip Lawson-Johnston*

**Gaelic Blessing**

May the Lord be with you when you rise  
May the wind be at your back  
May the Lord keep you in the hollow of his hand  
In the name of Jesus

**Amen**

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