

# 1st Sunday of Lent 21<sup>st</sup> February 2021 Introduction - The Temptation of Christ

During Lent 2021, Bishop Emma is leading us in an introduction to the refreshed 'God for All' vision for the diocese.

This week introduces her theme.

## Opening

The sacrifice of God  
is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart,  
O God,  
you will not despise. (Psalm 51.17)

## Sung worship:

### *And Can It Be*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQeIGbKqiw8>

*And Can It Be- Lou Fellingham*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oc3y07FWEAE>



## Confession

Jesus,  
full of the Holy Spirit,  
returned from the Jordan  
and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,  
where for forty days  
he was tempted by the devil.  
Let us confess our sins  
remembering before God  
the times when we have fallen  
from temptation  
into sin.

We confess to you our selfishness and lack of love:  
fill us with your Spirit.  
Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

We confess to you our fear and failure in sharing our  
faith:

fill us with your Spirit.

Christ, have mercy.

**Christ, have mercy.**

We confess to you our stubbornness and lack of trust:  
fill us with your Spirit.

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**



## Mark 1.9-15 The Temptation of Jesus

9 Not long afterward

Jesus came

from Nazareth in the province of Galilee,  
and was baptized by John  
in the Jordan.

10 As soon as Jesus came up out of the water,  
he saw heaven opening  
and the Spirit coming down on him like a dove.

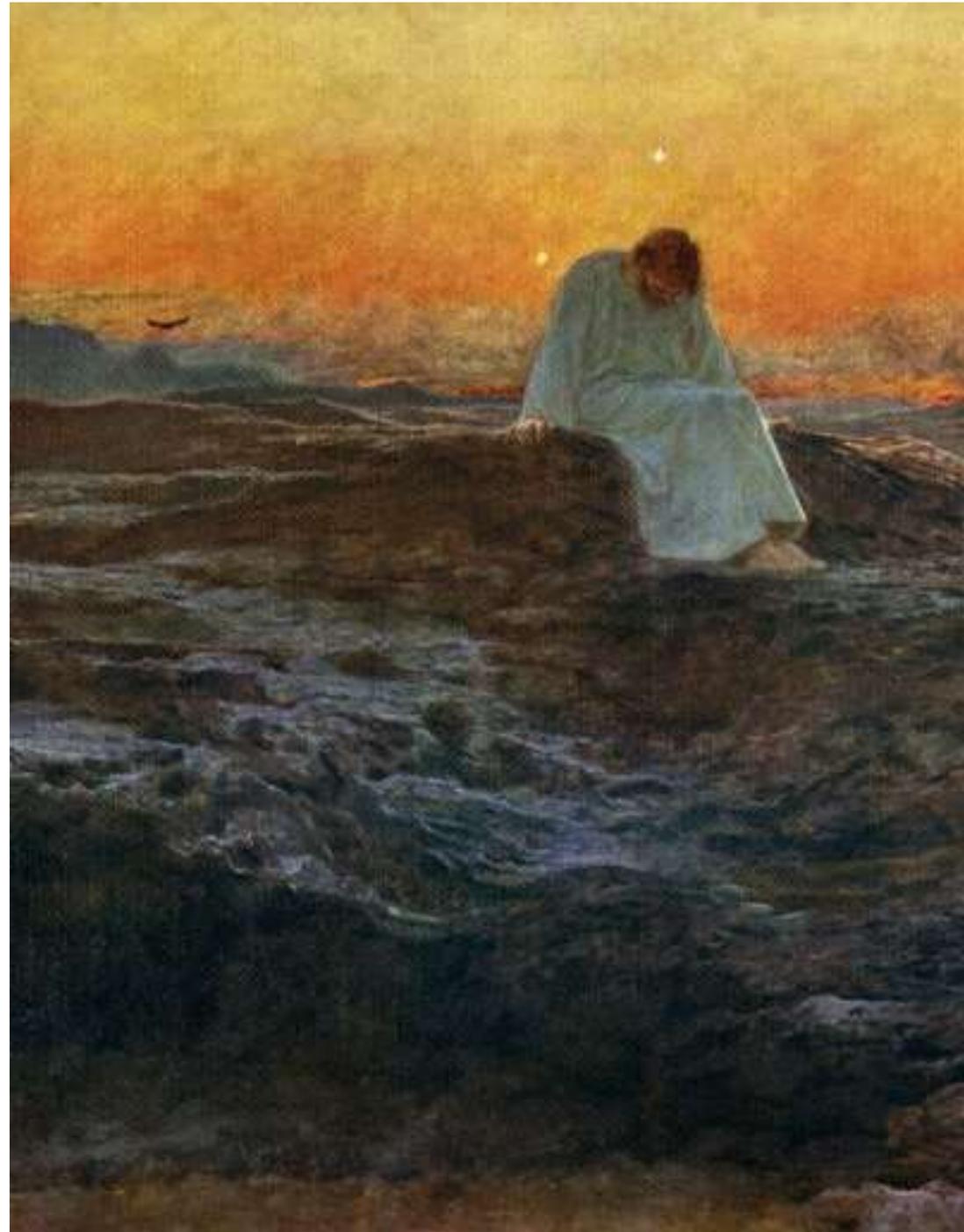
11 And a voice came from heaven,  
“You are my own dear Son. I am pleased with you.”

12 At once the Spirit made him go into the desert,  
13 where he stayed for forty days,  
being tempted by Satan.

Wild animals were there also,  
but angels came and helped him.

*Jesus in the desert 'How He Loves Me'*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5bfxGNMY9c>



'Christ in the Wilderness', 1898, by Briton Riviere.

## Sermon from Bishop Emma (or click here)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbmHwdhxJf8>

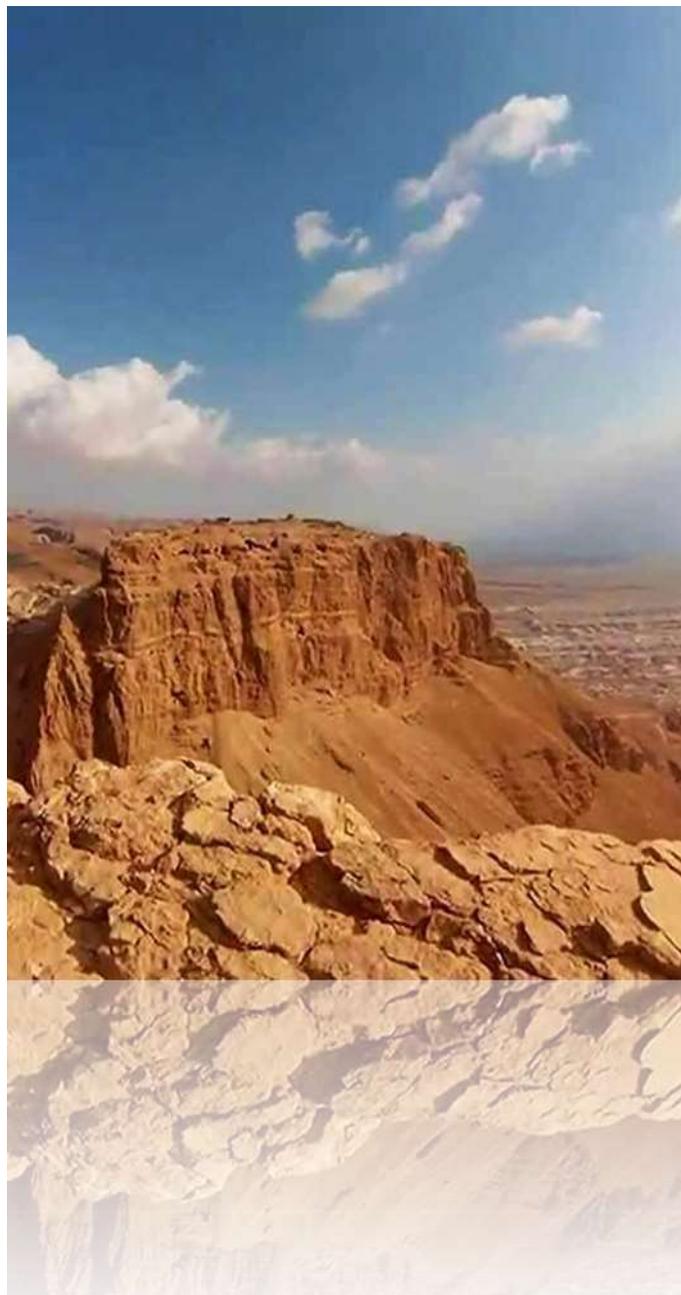
Today is the first Sunday of Lent when traditionally we focus on Jesus's temptation in the wilderness, as a model for our own overcoming of temptations, whatever those might be.

Sometimes on the first Sunday of Lent, the lectionary reading is from Matthew or Luke, where we have a much longer account, with details of the three temptations Jesus faced and how he dealt with each one.

But this year it is Mark, with its short and stark description of Jesus, the wilderness, the wild beasts, and the angels.

Right at the start of his ministry, Jesus is driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. This is part of his training for ministry to come, an intense time, a time of endurance, of isolation. It's no coincidence that the word 'quarantine' literally means '40 days'.

to humans, the opposite of the sort of place where you would want to settle down or stay for any length of time. 'When will this all end?' is a cry we have heard so often during the lockdown period.



Satan's intention was to tempt Jesus away from the mission that God had given him, to question his identity as the Son of God, and to try to divert him with offers of quick and glittering success rather than the hard task of saving the world that he had been sent by God to fulfil.

So this was 'quarantine' for Jesus - alone in the wilderness with the trainer from Hell. Literally.

In the Bible, the wilderness has always been a place of encounter with God. God's people Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Elijah spent 40 days in the wilderness and had there his most profound encounter with God.

We have become familiar with our own kind of 'testing in the wilderness' experience over the past year due to the suffering and restrictions of the the Covid pandemic. Although not comparable with Jesus's desert temptations, 'isolation' has been a very real concept for many - not being able to access all the things that bring us comfort, enjoyment, consolation, life.

In the Biblical narrative the wilderness was alien and inhospitable

But this wilderness, we're told by Mark, although hostile to human habitation was home to other kinds of creatures - wild beasts. Mark says of Jesus that he was 'with the wild animals'.

Anyone who has read the children's book *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak knows that it's often tricky to tell whether the



beasts are on your side or not. They are wild and untameable. They were not pets, or course, but Jesus doesn't seem to be threatened by them. Perhaps the wild beasts show us that mission in God's Kingdom will never be safe or predictable. There may be a rumpus. But the wild beasts can become your friends if like Jesus (and Max), you are not afraid.

Also in the wilderness, Jesus encounters angels who minister to him, as they did to Elijah when he fled to the wilderness. Even this place, devoid of comfort and all the things most necessary for human life, is not without God's provision.

So I wonder what this short and sharp description of Jesus facing temptation in the wilderness might offer to us in the way of comfort and direction this Lent? Lent is a wilderness season - a time when we are confronted with our own weaknesses but invited also to spend focussed time - alone and together - reflecting on who we are, deepening our walk with God, hearing his voice of affirmation calling us into the walk of discipleship, ministry and mission he has for each of us.

It is also a time when we are reflecting on, and launching our refreshed God for All vision: a vision

"to release the whole people of God for the whole mission of God for the transformation of Cumbria in Jesus's name".

Under that overarching vision sit 4 simple themes -

- to follow daily,
- speak boldly,
- care deeply, and
- tread gently.

What might Jesus's testing in the wilderness show us about each of these?

1. **Firstly** we might notice that it was only after this time in the wilderness that Jesus began his mission of announcing the arrival of the kingdom of God. My prayer through this whole Covid pandemic has been that out of this time of severe testing God might bring something new and fruitful; a new sense of purpose, a fresh sense of vocation after the stripping away. I pray that might be true of us as a diocese, as a Church of England, as a whole church of many different denominations. As we emerge from this wilderness experience we may be tempted to head off in all sorts of different directions that may be tempting, but are not God's will for us. And so we need a clear sense of vision to know how and where God is calling us to minister for him in the weeks and months ahead. That may be true of us as individuals too. What is God bringing out of this time of trial for you in terms of a new sense of direction, calling, ministry? Perhaps a new call to **'follow daily'** in every day life?

A vision 'to release the whole people of God for the whole mission of God for the transformation of Cumbria in Jesus's name' - follow daily, speak boldly, care deeply, tread gently.

2. **Secondly** Jesus's time of testing in the wilderness might cause us to examine our relationship to the wild beasts, whether that's the metaphorical wild beasts that we are afraid might stand in the way of our being able to fulfil something for God - perhaps the wild beasts of fear, or cynicism, or apathy. How can we learn to tame our fears, to make friends with the things that scare us most, so we can be as free as Jesus was to live out his mission the world? And how might Jesus being with the wild beasts cause us to think about the way we are with God's creation in the natural world? The bible tells us he was with the beasts in the same way he was with his disciples. Perhaps God's creation is more of a partner in mission than we ever allow ourselves to realise. As we seek to '**tread gently**' in the world this Lent, perhaps we might see the natural world as a significant part of that.
- 3.
3. **And thirdly** perhaps we will find reassurance that even in the most difficult times, God sent his angels to '**care deeply**' for Jesus, and he does for us too. This Lent I pray that we might each and as mission communities and churches become more and more aware of God's day by day provision for us - the unobtrusive ministry of the angels. We are never alone. As a whole people of God we are called to echo the care God has for us in our care for each other, to 'care deeply' for each other and for the communities in which he places us. Perhaps we need to ask ourselves, whose angel can I be today?
4. And from that point of quarantine, after his testing in the wilderness, after his choosing to follow God, not the temptations of satan, Jesus bursts back on to the scene, fulfilling his mission, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, speaking boldly,  
'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

That is what we are called to do too, to '**speak boldly**' of all that God has shown and taught us. To speak boldly about the coming of his kingdom, a kingdom of justice, peace wholeness and flourishing for all people and the created world.

Over this coming Lent let us pray that God would open our eyes and enlarge our hearts to see the possibilities of proclaiming, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the good news of his Kingdom.



**Follow Daily** **Care Deeply**  
**Speak Boldly** **Tread Gently**

## The Vision refresh prayer

Living Lord,  
as we offer to you our common life,  
refresh our vision  
that we may know your will  
and seek to follow in all your ways.

May we:

**follow daily** as your disciples,  
**care deeply** for one another in community,  
**speak boldly** your gospel words of love, and  
**tread gently** as faithful stewards of your goodness.

We ask this in the power of your holy name,  
as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of our lives,  
today and for ever.

Amen.

## Sung worship:

### *Forty Days and Forty Nights*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9N29ZnwU4LM>

### *Lord I need You - Matt Maher*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e37m3I5eH8g&list=PLBxunSRZWbKbxu6PQdwl-gWhL1J3MtId2>



## Collect

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.

### [Intercessions \(or click here\)](#)

We pray to the Lord for courage to give up other things  
and to give ourselves to him this Lent.

Give your Church the courage  
to give up her preoccupation with herself  
and to give more time to your mission in the world.

*[We pray for ...]*

May the blood and water flowing from the side of Jesus  
bring forgiveness to your people  
and help us to face the cost of proclaiming salvation.

Lord, meet us in the silence,  
**give us strength and hear our prayer.**

Give your world the courage  
to give up war, bitterness and hatred, and to seek peace.

*[We pray for ...]*

May the shoulders of the risen Jesus, once scourged by  
soldiers, bear the burden of political and military conflict in  
our world.



Lord, meet us in the silence,  
**give us strength and hear our prayer.**  
Give us the courage to give up quarrels, strife and jealousy  
in our families, neighbourhoods and communities.

*[We pray for ...]*

May the presence of the risen Jesus,  
his body once broken and now made whole,  
bring peace and direction as we live with one another.

Lord, meet us in the silence,  
**give us strength and hear our prayer.**

Give us the courage  
to give up our selfishness as we live for others,  
and to give time, care and comfort to the sick.

*[We pray for ...]*

May the wounded hands of Jesus bring his healing touch,  
and the light of his presence fill their rooms.

Lord, meet us in the silence,  
**give us strength and hear our prayer.**

Give us the courage to give up our fear of death  
and to rejoice with those who have died in faith.

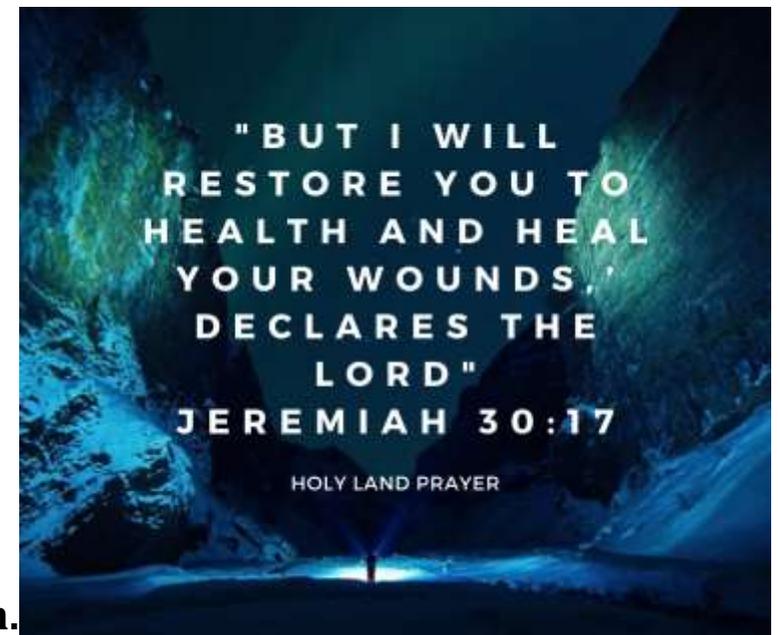
*[Especially we hold ... in our prayers.]*

May the feet of the risen Lord Jesus, once nailed to the cross,  
walk alongside the dying and bereaved in their agony,  
and walk with us and all your Church  
through death to the gate of glory.

Lord, meet us in the silence,  
**give us strength and hear our prayer, here and in eternity. Amen.**



Your Wounded Hands Can Heal  
This Heart of Stone - Luke Wood  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7iH4quWqxE>



## Blessing

May God the Father,  
who does not despise the broken spirit,  
give to you a contrite heart.

**Amen.**

May Christ,  
who bore our sins in his body on the tree,  
heal you by his wounds.

**Amen.**

May the Holy Spirit,  
who leads us into all truth,  
speak to you words of pardon and peace.

**Amen.**

And the blessing of God Almighty:  
Father, Son and Spirit  
Be with us all  
Today and always, Amen.

### Closing sung worship:

*Take my Life and Let it Be*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Of4l5bTdZ8M>

*Your Great Name - Natalie Grant*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zpLPh6LibE>

