

## Related topics

*For further study:*

Conversion; sin; paschal mystery; reconciliation; salvation

## Closing Prayer

Lord our God,  
you alone do we worship,  
only your word gives life.  
Sustain your Church on its Lenten journey.

When we walk through the desert of temptation,  
strengthen us to renounce the power of evil.  
When our faith is tested by doubt,  
illumine our hearts with Easter's bright promise.

We ask this through Christ, our deliverance and hope,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
holy and mighty God for ever and ever.

*Opening prayers · Lent 1C<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary* / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.

## The First Sunday of Lent

### Principal Service readings

Deuteronomy 26.1-11	The offering of first-fruits
Psalm 91.1-2,9-16 [or 91.1-11]	Under God's protection
Romans 10.8b-13	Justification by faith
Luke 4.1-13	Jesus is tested in the desert

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
speak to our hearts in the stillness,  
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,  
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;  
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

### Gospel Reading

#### *Jesus is tested in the desert*

<sup>1</sup>Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, <sup>2</sup>where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. <sup>3</sup>The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.' <sup>4</sup>Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone."'

<sup>5</sup>Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup>And the devil said to him, 'To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. <sup>7</sup>If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.' <sup>8</sup>Jesus answered him, 'It is written,

"Worship the Lord your God,  
and serve only him.'"

<sup>9</sup>Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, <sup>10</sup>for it is written,

"He will command his angels concerning you,  
to protect you",

"and

"On their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."

<sup>12</sup>Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."'

<sup>13</sup>When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Luke 4.1-13 NRSV<sup>1</sup>

## Comments and Questions

This section, which Luke shares with Matthew is part of Luke establishing an understanding about Jesus. Who is Jesus? He is the Son of God (3.21-38); he is obedient (4.1-13); he is a prophetic messenger (4.14-30).

The idea that Jesus was tested is emphatically stated in Hebrews 2.14-18 and 4.15. Mark summarises the testing in two short sentences (Mark 1.12-13). John notes the theme of testing throughout Jesus' ministry (John 6.14-15; 7.1-9; 12.27-28). Luke's vision is close to Matthew's – he differs only in the order, placing the test in Jerusalem in the last place. However, he frames the temptation between the genealogy (3.23-38) and Jesus' inaugural preaching (4.14-30). During the testing episode the reader learns about the quality of Jesus' sonship.

Luke notes that Jesus went without food (4.2), but doesn't call it 'fasting', unlike Matthew. In Luke, the testing comes after. Luke uses, like Matthew the word *diabolos*, in contrast to Mark's *satanas* for devil, although he does use us the term *satanas* elsewhere (10.18; 11.18; 13.16; 22.3, 31; Acts 5.3; 26.18), and also *beelzeboul* (11.15, 18, 19). Satan gets his reputation as tester from Job 2.3. The devil challenges Jesus to use divine power to provide 'bread in the wilderness (Exodus 16.14-21). Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 8.3: 'One does not live by bread alone'. Some manuscripts add: 'but on every word that comes from the mouth of God' as in Matthew 4.4, which completes the quotation from Deuteronomy.

'In an instant' (4.5) shows the experience to be visionary. The struggle between God and the powers of evil is seen as one between two

kingdoms. The devil has a powerful 'authority' (*exousia*) over those he rules (4.6). His shadow-kingdom parodies that of God, and enables him to offer seductions of power to messianic ambitions in that troubled place and time (4.7). Jesus gets to the heart of the battle in his response to serve the kingdom of God, and refers to Deuteronomy 6.13.

In the third temptation Luke mentions Jerusalem explicitly, whereas Matthew has 'the holy city' (Matthew 4.5). This shows Luke's interest in Jerusalem, where his gospel begins and ends. The devil now quotes from scripture, Psalm 90.11 (Septuagint) about protection, and Psalm 90.1 (Septuagint) about not stubbing his foot. In response Jesus cites Deuteronomy 6.16: 'do not put the Lord your God to the test' (4.12).

Luke's Christian readers learn that Jesus rejects power over nature serve his appetite, power over humans for the sake of glory, and power over God for his own survival. Instead, Jesus chooses the path of peace. The devil is rebuffed by Jesus, and goes away to wait for 'an opportune time' (4.12). He will return at the time of the passion.

## Quotations

### 1

As the most dangerous winds may enter at little openings, so the devil never enters more dangerously than by little unobserved incidents, which seem to be nothing, yet insensibly open the heart to great temptations.

John Wesley, 1703–1791

### 2

All the great temptations appear first in the region of the mind and can be fought and conquered there. We have been given the power to close the door of the mind. We can lose this power through disuse or increase it by use, by the daily discipline of the inner man in things which seem small and by reliance upon the word of the Spirit of truth. It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure. It is as though He said, 'Learn to live in your will, not in your feelings.

Amy Carmichael, 1867–1951

<sup>1</sup> New Revised Standard Version Bible is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.