

The First Sunday in Lent  
06-03-2022  
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Deuteronomy 26:1-11 Laying out the first fruits before the Lord

Psalms 91: 1-2, 9-16 Make the Lord your refuge and you will be kept safe

Romans 10: 4-13 Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved

Luke 4: 1-15 Jesus spends 40 days in the wilderness and is tempted by the devil

### Introduction

Today is the first Sunday in Lent. Lent is a season in our church calendar when we have set aside time to intentionally turn back to God, as we prepare for the celebration of Easter.

Our sentence of scripture for today, comes from our gospel reading:-

“Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.” Luke 4:8

As we gather for worship, I want to look at a question, which leads from this portion of scripture :-

“How do we put God first in our lives?”

### Why put God First?

But let us first look at the why. We should put God first in our lives, because we need God. The Christian Faith tells us that we are created by God to live in relationship with God. This is the best thing for us as human beings. This is the way we were created to live. But through our sin we are cut off from God.

The Christian faith also tells us that in the fullness of time, God sent Jesus into the world for us. In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, our sin can be forgiven and our relationship with God can be restored.

There is nothing we can do to restore our broken relationship with God. It is only by accepting what God has done for us in Jesus, that our sin is forgiven and our relationship with God is restored. Jesus calls us to put God first, so that we can live as God intended, in a way that is best for us. When we put God first, we can be assured of hope, no matter what happens in this life.

## Lent

So how does Lent help us to put God first? The observance of the time of Lent was originally a time set aside for those preparing for Baptism at Easter. Over time it became a season that the whole church observed. Lent is a penitential time, a time for us to be more aware of our failings before God. A time for us to be made more aware of our need for God.

But Lent is also a time to remind us that we are not stuck in our sins. Rather, Lent is a time when we prepare for the celebration of Easter. The Great Celebration of the Christian Church, where we recall the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the assurance of forgiveness that Jesus brings.

So Lent is a season where we intentionally spend time, acknowledging our need for God, and devoting of ourselves back to God and others.

## Giving then to God

If we know we're forgiven, we are then called to respond to God as disciples of Jesus. We are called to give of our Time, our Talents, and our Resources.

The reading from Deuteronomy today puts it like this:-

<sup>2</sup>you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the LORD your God will choose

We are called to give back to God out of thanksgiving, for all that God has done for us.

## Temptations and Challenges

Now whilst putting God first is best for us, it is not necessarily always easy. If we decide to put God first, we begin on our Christian Journey, and we will face temptations and challenges in our lives. If we aren't putting God first the devil doesn't need to worry about us, because the devil already has us. But when we decide to put God first, then we can be assured of temptations and challenges.

In today's gospel reading we hear how Jesus went out into the wilderness, and we hear of the three temptations that Jesus faced.

Let us look at these three temptations, of physical possessions, worldly power, and immortality, that Jesus faced and how Jesus can help us face temptations in our own lives.

## Physical Possessions

The first temptation is about Food, or in the bigger picture physical possessions or desires. Jesus replies to Satan with these words:-

‘It is written, “One does not live by bread alone.” ’

We have the capacity to make idols out of many of the physical things we have in our lives. Yes, we need physical things like food and shelter, but our most important need, is for a need for God. We need to be aware of this and not put our trust only in physical things. We need to put our trust primarily in God.

## Worldly Power

The second temptation is about Worldly Power. Jesus replies to Satan with these words:-

‘It is written, “Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”

Again power, in and of itself can be a good thing. We can use our power to help others, but in this reply, Jesus is addressing the temptation to abuse power. In Paul’s letter to the Philippians (2:3-5) we hear how we should use our power:-

<sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup>Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

## Immortality

The third temptation is about Immortality. Jesus replies to Satan with these words:-

‘It is said, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.” ’

This temptation is about testing God, believing we are the ones who should be in control of our lives and not God. If we have learned anything from the last few years in this world, is that we as humans have great capacity to achieve things, but ultimately we are not in control of the world. Things will happen that we will have no control over. The temptation we are looking at here is not trusting God. In Jesus we know that we can trust that God is with us, no matter what happens.

## Jesus answers with Scripture

An important aspect of how Jesus deals with these temptations in the wilderness is that he uses Scripture as the basis on which to face them. In our own lives we will be better enabled to face life's challenges and temptations if we are guided by God's word for us from the Bible.

When we hear the metaphor about putting on the armour of God, in Paul's letter to the Ephesians (6:17), we hear these words:-

<sup>17</sup>Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The sword is the only weapon mentioned to defend ourselves, and it is the Bible. Knowing the Scriptures will help us with the challenges and temptations we face in life.

## Assurance of Putting God First

In the Bible reading from Paul's letter to the Romans (10:9-10) today we have the assurance that putting God first is good for us:-

"If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved."

Those who have decided to put all of their faith, and hope, and trust in Jesus, will have the assurance that they, "Have been saved, are being saved, and will be saved."

## Conclusion

Life is a journey. Lent is a journey. On the journey we need to firstly accept Jesus, and then be constantly reminded to put God first. We will face challenges and temptations in life. If we hold fast to Jesus, we will not only survive any temptations the devil puts in our way, but we will thrive.

We are to put God first, not as a drudgery, but because it is actually the best thing for our lives to be in a relationship with the God who created us and loves us. The consequences for not putting God first are dire. It is literally a choice between Heaven and Hell.

I would like to finish with a verse from today's reading from Paul's letter to the Romans :-

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."