

The First Sunday in Lent  
26-02-2023  
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7 Adam and Eve – Tempted and Sin

Psalms 32 Happy are those who confess and are forgiven

Romans 5: 12-21 Justification is received through Jesus

Matthew 4: 1-11 Jesus tempted in the wilderness

### Introduction

Temptation, Temptation, Temptation.

Temptation seems to be the theme from our Scripture readings this morning. We've all given in to temptation at some time in our lives. But what we are looking at here today though is more specifically giving in to temptation to commit sin.

I'd like to use a section of The Lord's Prayer as a basis for what we look at in the sermon today.

'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.'

It seems to me that these two lines should be swapped around because the trial comes before the sin, so let's look at them in this reverse order.

### Save us from the time of trial

Firstly, save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

The Genesis reading and Matthew's Gospel are all about facing trials. It would be naive for us to think that by believing in Jesus we will not face trials in our lives. Adam and Eve faced a trial. There was a tree in the garden which they were not supposed to eat the fruit from. You might look at this story and say well why did God put the tree there for in the first place? Wouldn't it be better if there was no forbidden fruit? Then we wouldn't have a problem. Well, I suppose that's right there wouldn't be a problem, but then Adam and Eve may as well have been robots, as they would not be able to make any choices. They would have no freedom. So, God gave Adam and Eve freedom to choose, just as we now have that same freedom in our lives. Without freedom to choose we would be merely prisoners, and our obedience would be hollow.

The next point I'd like to look at is that God does not tempt us to sin. God loves us, God wants us to be close to him. But God does allow us freedom. In the letter from James we have here: -

“When tempted, No one should say “God is tempting me” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.”

When we look at the readings it is Satan who does the tempting. In fact, Satan is called the tempter in our Gospel reading today. In Adam and Eve’s case it is Satan, through the serpent, who convinces them that the fruit should be eaten, and in the Gospel, it is the devil himself who has the conversation with Jesus in the desert.

Satan will try to tempt us into sin in our lives. That’s what Satan does. We need to be conscious of this. We also need to remember that just being tempted in itself, is not a sin. It is when we give in to temptation that we sin.

There is a process which starts at temptation and leads to sin. Satan is very good at convincing us to give in to temptation. He uses every trick in the book. He disguises things to make it look as though they are not that bad. He fills us with desires fueled by materialism and power.

In the Genesis reading it was not as though Adam and Eve did not have enough to eat. They could eat from all of the rest of the trees in the garden. But Satan is clever in tempting us. They had wonderful freedom and variety, and yet Satan tricked them into only thinking about the one tree that they weren’t supposed to eat from.

As a child I can remember giving in to temptation. It was a time when Star Wars had just come out. I loved the little action figures and I had been bought some, but there were so many different ones. In reflection there were a number of factors which lead to my fall. Firstly, we were on holidays and I really wanted these toys to play with. Secondly, we were away from home, where people didn’t know us. Thirdly, we were staying with people I didn’t know very well and I came under the influence of an older boy, also there on holidays. We ended up very cleverly acquiring a number of action figures from the local Big W.

Sin is not necessarily straight forward, it’s not something that we can easily say yes or no to. The devil has a way of leading us down a path of temptation which we may not recognize.

Jesus was tempted in the desert. Sometimes, when we have desert like experiences in our lives, either physically or spiritually, the devil comes to tempt us. Satan knows he can often get in when our defences are down.

With all this talk of how good Satan is at his job you might be starting to wonder what help we have to resist temptation.

Our help is constantly in Jesus. The mission of his earthly life was to save us as sinners. Scripture assures us of this and I’ve selected a few verses, Firstly from Corinthians:-

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is Faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.”

And also from Philippians(4:13):-

“I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.”

So, as we face the temptations of life, we need to constantly rely on Jesus.

### Forgive us our Sins

And now let us look at the second line from the Lord’s Prayer.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

We ask God to forgive us our sins when we have fallen to temptation. We can be assured that he will forgive us and we hear that from Paul’s letter to the Romans today:-

But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

How often do we concentrate on the second part of this line though,

“As we forgive those who sin against us.”

There is often a great temptation, not to forgive others. We need to resist this at all costs and forgive.

It doesn’t mean we accept the wrongs that others may do to us, it doesn’t mean we continue to allow bad things to happen. It doesn’t mean we condone bad behaviour.

Forgiving others may be among the more difficult things we will have to do in our lives. We may need to remove ourselves from a bad situation, or we may need to turn to others for help, but we still have to learn to forgive.

Because when we forgive, we are enabled to embrace, and live into, our own forgiveness.

### Conclusion

So, as we begin Lent, and prepare ourselves for the Celebration of Easter, let us be mindful that sin is very real, and the temptation to sin is also very real.

But Jesus is always there to help us. We need to be on guard to resist temptations that come our way, so that we might live into the wonderful lives that God has planned for us. Amen.