

Whitehorse Uniting Church
Written Worship
Sunday 26 February 2023
Lent 1

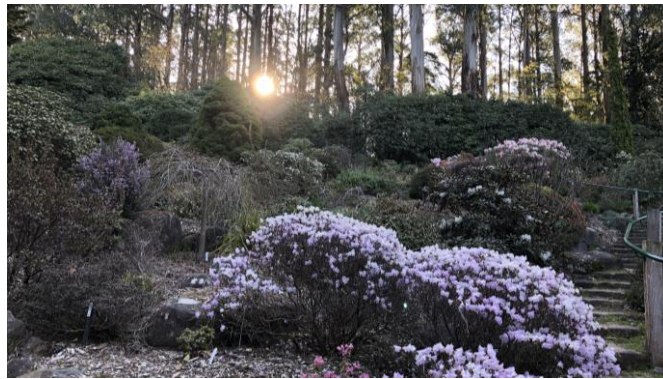


Introit – 703 As the Deer pants

Martin Nystrom 1956 -

Robin Mark 2011 Citrail

<https://youtu.be/FBppKZ0eJIQ>



Welcome

May the worship bless you.

Acknowledgment

We acknowledge those who were here before us, the first inhabitants of this place

We honour them for their custodianship of the land on which we gather today.

Call to Worship

Lord, you are our hiding place.

You surround us with glad cries of deliverance.

Lord, your steadfast love surrounds those who trust in you.

We will be glad and rejoice in you our faithful and loving Lord.

Prayers of adoration

Lord you are our hiding place and surround us with glad cries of deliverance. We will be glad and rejoice, for you Lord are faithful to us. You help us avoid making decisions when we are weary and afraid. You help us put our trust in you and not put you to the test. You help us stay on the path and follow Jesus. You hold us and help us stay faithful to you through life's challenges. You help us lean into you when we feel tempted to leave the path to you, for you are our hiding place, our refuge in times of distress. Your love surrounds us.

Jesus our Lord, you help us be led by the Spirit, like you were. You teach us how to put our trust in God where we live by God's word, and trust, and worship God.

Holy Spirit, you lead us into the wilderness of lent. Help us to love as Jesus loved. Make lent a fruitful time for us, a time of blessing and peace. Amen

Prayer of Confession

Come before the Lord in reverence and silence with all that's on your heart asking for wholeness, transformation, and forgiveness.

Silence

Hear then Christ's words of grace to us

"Your sins are forgiven"

THANKS BE TO GOD



Image RCL

Hymn 684 Love will be our Lenten calling.

Elizabeth J. Smith 1956-

Holy Hermits online 2022

<https://youtu.be/RLegowSR2nk>

Reading – Matthew 4:1-11 (NRSVue)

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. ² He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was famished. ³ The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.' " ⁷ Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' "

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, ⁹ and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.' " ¹¹ Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Scripture quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Young at Heart



Ponder about making decisions and how it's important not to make them when we are afraid or driven.

Far better to be at peace and drawn by love.

(Leunig – used with permission)

Hymn 561 Who Would True Valour See

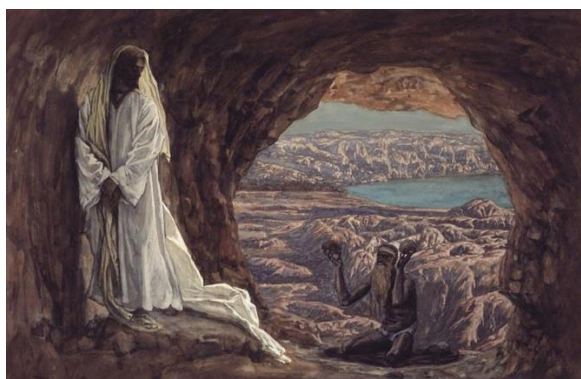
John Bunyan 1628-88 The Hymn Club 2012

<https://youtu.be/5yHJMPw8RHU>

Sermon

In the name of the Father the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen.

Today's gospel tells us the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness after his baptism where he was tempted by the devil. He had fasted for 40 days and nights and was famished. That's when the devil came to tempt him, to make bread from rocks.



RCL

Jesus must have been feeling weary and vulnerable and that's when the devil comes. Jesus responded by quoting scripture, we live by the word of God, not just bread. Perhaps some of us are tempted when we are weary and unwell. We may feel vulnerable and embrace negative thinking that goes around and around in our mind until we risk becoming a negative person. We often embody our negative thinking and feelings and become entrapped in them. Perhaps that's a good time to turn to God's words and find spiritual food to sustain us and help us become more positive.

Perhaps the words of God can cure negativity or anger or forms of thinking and feeling that make us vulnerable to temptations.

After this the first temptation the devil took Jesus to the top of the temple, to the pinnacle of God's Holy Place and tempted him and tried to plant seeds of doubt. Jesus just learnt God is his father and been called beloved by God.



RCL

The devil tempts Jesus to put God to the test and throw himself down so God would save him. The devil strikes at Jesus' love for God and his trust in God and in God's faithfulness to him as his beloved son. Jesus is not tempted. He knows God loves him and cares for him. He doesn't need to prove this to himself. He has no doubts in God's love. Perhaps the devil is trying to tempt him away from his call where he will not be saved by God from the cross.

Perhaps we are tempted to do things that force God to show love to us when we say to God, 'if you do this I will believe.' Or 'if this happens, I will believe.' when God is there for us, no matter what. We need only pray and listen to the still small voice of the Spirit in our hearts and believe what Jesus taught us, 'My sheep hear my voice and follow me.' We need to believe God loves us, no matter what. It's not about God doing things for us.

So, what did Jesus do? He quoted scripture. "Do not put the Lord God to the test".

I wonder if this would work for us when we feel tempted to doubt God's love for us. We keep on reading scripture until we feel convinced God loves us.

Now the devil knew Jesus had God's authority and power. Yet the devil offered to give Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. There is some irony in this, for Jesus said before he was crucified: "My kingdom is not of this world". Why tempt him? God's kingdom is greater than all worldly kingdoms. Any attempt by a human being to exercise power over worldly kingdoms is fleeting, as is their life. God's power is greater than any other form of power. What is going on here?

The price was to worship the devil. That means rejecting God and Jesus leaving his path. That's the nature of evil, to take us off our path. There are many temptations that can consume us and take us off our path.

So, what does Jesus do? He says: "Away with you." He commands the devil to leave him. Then he quoted scripture. 'Worship the Lord your God and serve only God.' Jesus remained faithful to God, to his call and he stayed on his path and the devil gave up and left him.

I wonder what the best strategy is when we are tempted to leave our path and embrace behaviour that takes us far away from God. Would turning to scripture be the cure or a popcorn prayer like "Lord" or remembering who we are or what kind of legacy we want to leave.



RCL

Often when we face an illness, grief, rejection, or disappointment or being hurt by another, we are tempted to give up, feel despair, defeated, or afraid. We can feel like we are in a dark cave when all we have to do is turn around and there is the light at the end of the tunnel that leads to life.

If we can find a way to resist temptations like Jesus did, we will stay on our path. No matter how bad things get, continuing to worship God and serve God is the cure. Living our faith, putting it into practice is the cure for temptations. If we can stay focused on God, our faith will see us through.

God will send people to us who are like angels, and they will care for us, comfort us, and bring God's message to us that we are loved.

Today's gospel invites us to hold fast to God's word, trust God loves us and worship and serve God. Then we can weather any storm, challenge, or temptation, like Jesus did.



Image © Tina Lyndon

Hymn 619 Have faith in God my heart.

Bryn Austin Rees 1911-83 Words Mrs Olwen Scott

(Written by Bryn Austin Ree following an air raid on Ipswich during WWII). Paul Coleman 2020

<https://youtu.be/uBbrwRImEBk>

Offering Prayer

Lord and giver of every good thing we bring to you our lives and gifts for your kingdom all for transformation through your grace and love made known in Jesus Christ our Saviour, amen

Prayers of the People – Trevor de Run

Let us pray-

Loving God, we praise you for your creation and for all that you have richly provided. As we come to you with our prayers of the people, open our eyes to your glory, open our minds to your truth, open our hearts to your love, and open our wills to your control. Hear us and receive our prayers that we ask in faith.

Merciful God, we pray for your world and in particular today, for the countries of Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Give wisdom to the leaders in the government of these countries and for all those in authority, to work for the good of its peoples.

We pray for the countries that have been affected by the recent natural disasters of major earthquakes in Turkey, Syria and to a lesser degree in New Zealand, as well as the devastating floods, landslides and mudslides in Brazil,

Mozambique, New Zealand, Peru and in the states of Kentucky & West Virginia, USA. Be with the rescue workers as they assist in all of these disaster areas and comfort the survivors and those who have lost their loved ones.

Heavenly Father, we pray for our Whitehorse Uniting Church, and we seek guidance for our leaders as they work to unite our congregation with a shared purpose and vision. We pray for our ministers, Rev. Tina and Rev. Peter. Bless, guide and encourage them as they serve you as our leaders and teachers.

We pray for the other churches in our region, in particular for the Baptist Church of Mitcham; and for all who minister within our Presbytery in Canterbury at the Balwyn Road Church and at the Highfield Road Church. Give their leaders wisdom, that they will respond to your will for them and for their community. We also offer our prayers for Uniting's Hotham Mission, which provides educational support, food relief and other general support to young people and their families in the North Melbourne and surrounding areas.

Almighty God, we praise you for the way you can take the ordinary things and make them new; you are able to take ordinary lives lived by ordinary people and fill them with meaning; you are able to take lives filled with brokenness, selfishness, and ugliness, and bring restoration and renewal of hearts and minds. We praise you for that love which passes all understanding, and which is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray....

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Hymn 628 In Faith and Hope and Love

From Cantus Choro Al B's Music 2015
From the Album "Songs and Praises" Favourite Hymns from the
Australian Hymn Book Vol 3 – James Phillip McAuley 1917-76
<https://youtu.be/Plyz5kg834M>

Blessing

May the Blessing of the Holy Trinity of Love be upon you
the fire of the Spirit to ignite you
the love of God to encircle you
and the wisdom of Christ to enliven you
this day and evermore, amen

Dismissal

Go in peace and remember:
Goodness is stronger than evil
Love is stronger than hate
Light is stronger than darkness
Life is stronger than death
Victory is ours
Through Christ who loves us. Amen

Hymn 779 May the Feet of God

Robin & Dorothy Mann 2015
<https://youtu.be/WfOFIWxGaP8>

Pastoral Care tips for Lent

*Love one another and you will be happy.
It's as simple and difficult as that.
There is no other way.*



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This lent I bring to you the Art and faith Series from Loyola Press. It's a series of online YouTubes that take you on a profound journey through reflection on the arts and promises to deepen our faith in Christ.

The commentary on YouTube is by Daniella Zsupan-Jerome, assistant professor of liturgy, catechesis, and evangelization at Loyola University New Orleans. She holds a bachelor's degree in theology from the University of Notre Dame, a master's degree in liturgy from St. John's University in Collegeville, a master's degree in religion and the arts from Yale Divinity School, and a Ph.D. in theology and education from Boston College. Her commentaries offer us profound reflections on paintings that connect with each week's gospel during Lent.

May you be blessed by these commentaries.

Ash Wednesday

https://youtu.be/Ng_S6QvO0AU

lent 1

<https://youtu.be/rypERphCxwg>

The link to all the series

https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year/lent/arts-and-faith-for-lent/?utm_source=ignsp&utm_medium=blog&utm_campaign=lent2023

Something different and quite beautiful

How Deep the Father's Love for us – a capella

<https://youtu.be/03Am8F52x2E>

Stuart Townsend. Sung by Joe Sutton 2022

Easter Song 2021

CCLI Song # 1558110

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