

*This Sunday at St. Luke's Blue Ridge  
February 18, 2018*

# The First Sunday in Lent



Jesus faced temptation in the desert. This being so, we should not be surprised when *we* are tempted. Jesus' response teaches us how we should respond.

## Getting Right with God

The name "Lent" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon "lencten", i.e. spring, the time of the year during which the Church season occurs. Lent has been kept since the seventh century as a forty-day period of fasting and abstinence in preparation for Easter. The Gospel recounts Jesus fasting forty days in the desert and being tempted by the devil.

Note that the forty-day period is made up of the weekdays; the six Sundays are excluded and that is why they are Sundays *in* Lent, not Sundays *of* Lent.

## *The Collect for Lent 1*

O LORD, who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights; Give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey thy godly motions in righteousness, and true holiness, to thy honour and glory, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

NOTE: Many Christians "give up something for Lent" or practice some form of abstinence in this season, but for what purpose? This Collect tells us that it is undertaken that we may better obey God's lead ("his godly motions"), do his will ("in righteousness") and pay him the respect that is his due ("in true holiness") -- so that we may bring honour and glory to his Name.

## *The Collect for the Season*

O LORD, who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights; Give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey thy godly motions in righteousness, and true holiness, to thy honour and glory, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

NOTE: This Collect for Ash Wednesday is to be used every day in Lent. In this prayer, we address a God who loves the sinner and who is ready to forgive him when he is "penitent" -- that is, truly sorry for his sins. The repentance which wins God's forgiveness has three stages, as shown in the following lines:

Contrition means "I'm sorry,"

Confession means "I'll tell"

Compensation means "I'll try to make amends as well".

The first stage is reached when we ask God to "create and make in us new and contrite hearts". In our Lord's teaching repentance involves a break with the past and "turning right round" .

Then follows confession -- "worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness" -- which must come before any seeking of forgiveness; after which we are to serve and please God in newness of life". (Note that "remission" and "forgiveness" are two words for the same thing: sin is both a *debt* to be remitted and an *offence* to be forgiven.)

## **THE EPISTLE (H.C.) – 2 Corinthians 6:1-10 (J.B. Phillips)**

### *Working with God*

**6** <sup>1-2</sup> As co-operators with God himself we beg, you then, not to fail to use the grace of God. For God's word is—'In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you'. Now is the "acceptable time", and this very day is the "day of salvation".

<sup>3-10</sup> As far as we are concerned we do not wish to stand in anyone's way, nor do we wish to bring discredit on the ministry God has given us. Indeed we want to prove ourselves genuine ministers of God whatever we have to go through—patient endurance of troubles or even disasters, being flogged or imprisoned; being mobbed, having to work like slaves, having to go without food or sleep. All this we want to meet with sincerity, with insight and patience; by sheer kindness and the Holy Spirit; with genuine love, speaking the plain truth, and living by the power of God. Our sole defence, our only weapon, is a life of integrity, whether we meet honour or dishonour, praise or blame. Called "impostors" we must be true, called "nobodies" we must be in the public eye. Never far from death, yet here we are alive, always "going through it" yet never "going under". We know sorrow, yet our joy is inextinguishable. We have "nothing to bless ourselves with" yet we bless many others with true riches. We are penniless, and yet in reality we have everything worth having.

NOTE: The apostle points out that the ministers of reconciliation are workers together with Christ and have a pressing, present responsibility regarding diligence and discipline, on the one hand, and winsomeness of spirit, on the other. This kind of joyous yet serious Christian is equipped to face the various demands of daily relationships.

## **THE GOSPEL (H.C.) – St. Matthew 4:1-11 (J.B. Phillips)**

### *Jesus faces temptation alone in the desert*

**4** <sup>1-2</sup> Then Jesus was led by the Spirit up into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. After a fast of forty days and nights he was very hungry.

<sup>3</sup> "If you really are the Son of God," said the tempter, coming to him, "tell these stones to turn into loaves."

<sup>4</sup> Jesus answered, "The scripture says 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'."

<sup>5-6</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the highest ledge of the Temple. "If you really are the Son of God," he said, "Throw yourself down. For the scripture says—'He shall give his angels charge concerning you,' and 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone'."

<sup>7</sup> "Yes," retorted Jesus, "and the scripture also says 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God'."

<sup>8-9</sup> Once again the devil took him to a very high mountain, and from there showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their magnificence. “Everything there I will give you,” he said to him, “if you will fall down and worship me.”

<sup>10</sup> “Away with you, Satan!” replied Jesus, “the scripture says, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only you shall serve’.”

<sup>11</sup> Then the devil let him alone, and the angels came to him and took care of him.

NOTE: This is the dramatic picture of our Lord's temptations before he began his ministry. Here we see the ancient religious practice of fasting in proper perspective: as an aid to spiritual devotions.

## **READINGS FOR MORNING PRAYER**

### **(10 A.M. SERVICE)**

#### **FIRST LESSON – Ecclesiasticus 2 (GNT) (Apocrypha)**

##### *Faithfulness to God*

<sup>2</sup> My child, if you are going to serve the Lord, be prepared for times when you will be put to the test. <sup>2</sup> Be sincere and determined. Keep calm when trouble comes. <sup>3</sup> Stay with the Lord; never abandon him, and you will be prosperous at the end of your days. <sup>4</sup> Accept whatever happens to you. Even if you suffer humiliation, be patient. <sup>5</sup> Gold is tested by fire, and human character is tested in the furnace of humiliation. <sup>6</sup> Trust the Lord, and he will help you. Walk straight in his ways, and put your hope in him.

<sup>7</sup> All you that fear the Lord, wait for him to show you his mercy. Do not turn away from him, or you will fall. <sup>8</sup> All you that fear the Lord, trust him, and you will certainly be rewarded. <sup>9</sup> All you that fear the Lord, look forward to his blessings of mercy and eternal happiness.

<sup>10</sup> Think back to the ancient generations and consider this: has the Lord ever disappointed anyone who put his hope in him? Has the Lord ever abandoned anyone who held him in constant reverence? Has the Lord ever ignored anyone who prayed to him? <sup>11</sup> The Lord is kind and merciful; he forgives our sins and keeps us safe in time of trouble. <sup>12</sup> But those who lose their nerve are doomed—all those sinners who try to have it both ways! <sup>13</sup> Doom is sure to come for those who lose their courage; they have no faith, and so they will have no protection. <sup>14</sup> Doom is sure to come for those who lose their hope. What will they do when the Lord comes to judge them?

<sup>15</sup> Those who fear the Lord do not disobey his commands; those who love him will live as he wants them to live. <sup>16</sup> Those who fear and love the Lord will try to please him and devote themselves to the Law. <sup>17</sup> Those who fear the Lord are always ready to serve him. They humble themselves before him, and say,

<sup>18</sup> We place our destiny in the hands of the Lord, not in human hands, because his mercy is as great as his majesty.

NOTE: This reading is taken from the Apocrypha, books printed between the Old Testament and New Testaments in some Bibles. The Anglican position on the Apocrypha is set forth in the 39 Articles of Religion:

**"The books of the Apocrypha, as Jerome says, are read by the church for examples of life and instruction in behaviour, but the church does not use them to establish any doctrine"** (contemporary version taken from *An English Prayer Book*).

Jerome (c. 347 - 419 / 420), mentioned here, is considered to be the foremost biblical scholar of the ancient Church. He is best remembered for his translation of the Bible which came to be known as the Vulgate.

In today's reading, God's faithful servant is subjected temptations which are liable to overwhelm him except for God's help and power. The writer's admonition to stay near God in times of trouble still stands. Likewise, his insight that those who are serious about serving God will face times of testing remains relevant for Christians today.

## **NEW TESTAMENT LESSON – Romans 7:14-25 (J.B. Phillips)**

*The Law is good, but it cannot make men good*

<sup>14-20</sup> After all, the Law itself is really concerned with the spiritual—it is I who am carnal, and have sold my soul to sin. In practice, what happens? My own behaviour baffles me. For I find myself not doing what I really want to do but doing what I really loathe. Yet surely if I do things that I really don't want to do, I am admitting that I really agree with the Law. But it cannot be said that "I" am doing them at all—it must be sin that has made its home in my nature. (And indeed, I know from experience that the carnal side of my being can scarcely be called the home of good!) I often find that I have the will to do good, but not the power. That is, I don't accomplish the good I set out to do, and the evil I don't really want to do I find I am always doing. Yet if I do things that I don't really want to do then it is not, I repeat, "I" who do them, but the sin which has made its home within me.

<sup>21-25</sup> When I come up against the Law I want to do good, but in practice I do evil. My conscious mind whole-heartedly endorses the Law, yet I observe an entirely different principle at work in my nature. This is in continual conflict with my conscious attitude, and makes me an unwilling prisoner to the law of sin and death. In my mind I am God's willing servant, but in my own nature I am bound fast, as I say, to the law of sin and death. It is an agonizing situation, and who on earth can set me free from the clutches of my sinful nature? I thank God there is a way out through Jesus Christ our Lord.

NOTE: In this passage, St. Paul frankly admits that sin is something more deadly than evil I myself choose. It takes possession of me and wars against the good I choose (7:18-19). When we understand this passage, the General Confession becomes a realistic, urgent, practical prayer. The apostle's conclusion is that I cannot possibly deliver myself; I need help and strength from outside of me. Only Jesus Christ can save me, he concludes.

# Services on the First Sunday in Lent

- **8:15 a.m.** – Holy Communion (said service)

*A quiet meditative service:*

Celebrant: The Rector

Preacher: The Rev. Ronald O. Wikander

Lector: Sam Sartain

Acolyte / Server: Finn Thoresen

- **10:00 a.m.** Morning Prayer, Litany and Sermon (choral)\*

*Classic Anglican morning service with hymns and exposition of the Scriptures*

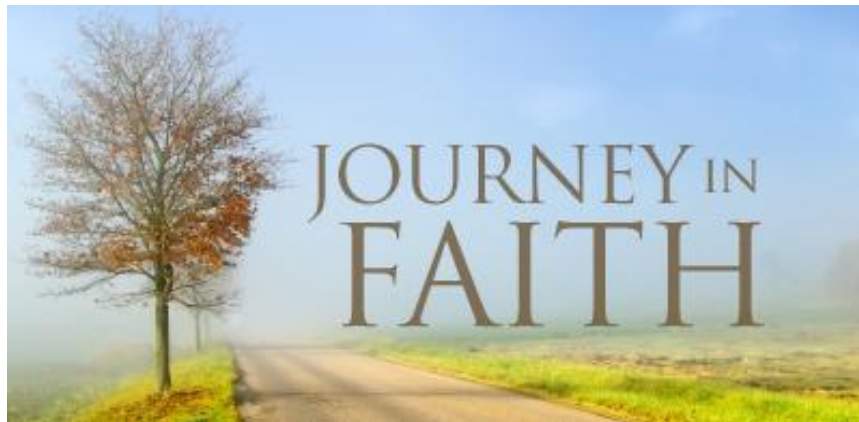
Preacher: The Rector

Acolyte: Brooke McHan

Lay Reader: Bob Morgan

Ushers: Don and Sally Hess

\* Anyone wishing to receive Holy Communion (consecrated elements reserved from the 8:15 service) should assemble in the Jennus Chapel following the organ postlude.



## ***Journey in Faith Class This Tuesday, Feb. 20***

The Rector's "Journey in Faith: Exploring the Anglican Way" class will meet Tuesday, Feb. 20. This class will focus on the "History of the Church". It will complement previous classes on *The Way In: Baptism and Confirmation*, *The Faith of the Church* and *The Worship of the Church*.

Mr. Morgan is happy to provide those unable to attend class sessions Power Point slides being used in the course. In addition, he is happy to provide a copy of two books being read in conjunction with classroom instruction: *Basic Christianity*

by John Stott and *The Ways and Teachings of the Church: A Course of Instruction*  
by Lefferd M.A. Haughwout

**Financial Pledge for the Year of our Lord 2018**

*As stewards of God's gifts and in gratitude for all blessings, I pledge the following amount to the work of Christ through  
St. Luke's Church for 2018*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Amount \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Weekly \_\_\_\_\_ Monthly \_\_\_\_\_ Yearly

(Please tick the appropriate blank)

*Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him to store, as God has prospered him. 1 Corinthians 16:2*

# REMEMBER THE NEEDY

## EVERY TIME YOU COME TO CHURCH



*Please bring one or more item for the needy -- paper, soap products, tinned and dried food, etc. Leave in Narthex. Items will be distributed through North Georgia Community Action Agency*



### NEW SIGN-UP SHEET FOR 2018 IS AVAILABLE

A sign-up sheet for Altar flowers is available in Thomason Hall for 2018. Please sign up for days you wish to commemorate.

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St. Luke's Church, "The Parish Church of the Mountains," 7 Ewing St., (POB 1821), Blue Ridge, Georgia 30513; [\(706\) 632-8245](tel:7066328245); [www.stlukesblueridge.org](http://www.stlukesblueridge.org); [stlukes@tds.net](mailto:stlukes@tds.net).