



The Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit

Sunday 22nd February 2026: Lent 1

Today's theme is "Temptation"

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Call to Worship

Only by grace can we enter, only by grace can we stand; not by human endeavour, but by the blood of the Lamb. Into your presence you call us, you call us to come. Into your presence you draw us, and now by your grace I come.

Hymn 727 God in his love for us https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwBLsS6M4jQ&list=RDZwBLsS6M4jQ&start_radio=1

God in such love for us lent us this planet,
gave it a purpose in time and in space:
small as a spark from the fire of creation,
cradle of life and the home of our race.

Thanks be to God for its bounty and beauty,
life that sustains us in body and mind:
plenty for all, if we learn how to share it,
riches undreamed-of to fathom and find.

Long have our human wars ruined its harvest;
long has earth bowed to the terror of force;
long have we wasted what others have need of,
poisoned the fountain of life at its source.

Earth is the Lord's: it is ours to enjoy it,
Ours, as God's stewards, to farm and defend.
From its pollution, misuse, and destruction,
good Lord deliver us, world without end!

Reading: Genesis 2:15 - 17, 3:1 – 7

Reflection

When you were a child your parent(s) may have given you clear instructions that they expected you to follow, e.g. "Don't talk to strangers" or "Don't accept sweets or gifts from strangers". What motivated them to do this? Is it a fair assumption to make that they were concerned about keeping you safe? So, why did God tell Adam not to eat the fruit from one particular tree in the garden at Eden? Was that like parental control and concern for Adam's safety? It seems to be more about finding out whether Adam would obey God's instructions when the temptation came to do otherwise. Picture yourself in a situation where you must choose between obeying God and ignoring his prompting that you do something, e.g. somebody is being badly treated for no good reason, do you ignore it, or do you seek to lend support to the victim and oppose the offender?

The temptation to go against God's will occurs frequently. However, we seldom anticipate what the consequence will be. Having eaten the forbidden fruit, both Adam and Eve discover something about themselves they hadn't realised before. They were naked and felt ashamed because of it. This caused them to take action to overcome their embarrassment. Perhaps, what they should have been more ashamed of, was their disobedience. Think about the story of the (Good) Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) who rescued a victim of mugging. If that Samaritan hadn't taken action to help the victim, who knows what would have happened to him. He might have died. So, we must be ready to make the right (Godly) decision when we are tested by the circumstances, we find ourselves in.

Hymn 237 Jesus, tempted in the desert

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nq-B66S3L-w&list=RDNq-B66S3L-w&start_radio=1

Jesus, tempted in the desert,
Lonely hungry, filled with dread
"Use your power" the tempter tells him;
"Turn these barren rocks to bread!"
"Not alone by bread" he answers,
"Can the human heart be filled.
Only by the word that calls us
Is our deepest hunger stilled!"

Jesus, tempted at the temple,
High above its ancient wall:
"Throw yourself from lofty turret;
Angels wait to break your fall!"
Jesus shuns such empty marvels,
Feats that fickle crowds request:
"God, whose grace protects, preserves us,
We must never vainly test."

Jesus tempted on the mountain
By the lure of vast domain
"Fall before me! Be my servant!
Glory, fame, you're sure to gain!"
Jesus sees the dazzling vision,
Turns his eyes another way:
"God alone deserves our homage!
God alone will I obey!"

When we face temptation's power,
Lonely, struggling, filled with dread,
Christ, who knew the tempter's hour,
Come and be our living bread.
By your grace, protect, preserve us
Lest we fall, your trust betray.
Yours above all other voices,
Be the Word we hear, obey.

Reading: Matthew 4: 1 - 11

Prayer of Confession

Heavenly Father,

forgive me, for the occasions when I have been tempted to go against your will. Forgive me for the times when I have ignored your prompting to help someone in distress. Forgive me for using my talent, skills and knowledge for personal advantage, rather than the benefit of all. Help me to follow the teaching and example Jesus provided through the way he lived his life. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn 419 Almighty God, we come to make confession

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBFik8SfJFA>

Almighty God, we come to make confession
for we have sinned in thought and word and deed.
We now repent in honesty and sorrow;
forgive us, Lord, and meet us in our need.

Forgiving God, I come to make confession
of all that I have failed to do this day;
of help withheld, concern and love restricted,
forgive me, Lord, and lead me in your way.

Forgiving God, I come to make confession
of all the harm and hurt that I have done;
of bitter words and many selfish actions,
forgive me, Lord, and make me like your Son.

Redeeming God, we come to seek forgiveness,
for Jesus Christ has died to set us free.
Forgive the past and fill us with your Spirit
that we may live to serve you joyfully.

Prayer of Intercession and Petition

Heavenly Father,

when I think about the problems in the world today, I realise how human folly has caused so many of them. The temptation to go against your will, has progressed to such an extent that some people can no longer see their way forward. I pray that the leaders of nations will seek to follow your guidance rather than ignoring it. I pray that all those who call themselves Christian, will seek to follow the example and teaching of Jesus, and strive to promote peace. I think of people who feel they have been abandoned because of the circumstances they are in. May they receive the support and reassurance they need to rebuild their lives. I think of those who are suffering because of severe or long-term illness. Enable those who can help them, to do so quickly. I pray for those who are struggling because of broken relationships. Too often we seek to justify ourselves after spoiling a relationship. I pray for the restoration of humility, honesty and integrity among all who are trying to mend broken relationships. Lord, in your mercy, hear my prayer.

Hymn 563 O Jesus I have promised to serve you to the end, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrooaJ56dvc>

O Jesus, I have promised
to serve Thee to the end;
be Thou forever near me,
my Master and my Friend;
I shall not fear the battle
if Thou art by my side,
nor wander from the pathway
if Thou wilt be my Guide.

O let me hear Thee speaking
in accents clear and still,
above the storms of passion,
the murmurs of self-will;
O speak to reassure me,
to hasten or control!
O speak, and make me listen,
Thou Guardian of my soul!

O let me feel Thee near me,
the world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,
the tempting sounds I hear;
my foes are ever near me,
around me and within;
but, Jesus, draw Thou nearer,
and shield my soul from sin.

O Jesus, Thou hast promised
to all who follow Thee
that where Thou art in glory
there shall Thy servant be;
and, Jesus, I have promised
to serve Thee to the end;
O give me grace to follow,
my Master and my Friend!

Dismissal: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with me now and forever. Amen.