

# 21<sup>st</sup> February 2021 – Morning Service

## Jesus Guided by Scripture

Martyn Filsak

### Call to Worship Psalm 19:7-8

The law of the Lord is perfect and revives the soul.

The Lord's instruction never fails; it makes the simple wise.

The precepts of the Lord are right and give joy to the heart.

The commandment of the Lord is pure and gives light to the eyes.

### StF 334 – Praise to the holiest

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| 1) Praise to the Holiest in the height,<br>And in the depth be praise;<br>In all his words most wonderful,<br>Most sure in all his ways.         | 4) And that a higher gift than grace<br>Should flesh and blood refine,<br>God's presence and his very self,<br>And essence all-divine. |
| 2) O loving wisdom of our God!<br>When all was sin and shame,<br>A second Adam to the fight<br>And to the rescue came.                           | 5) O generous love! that he, who came<br>As man to smite the foe,<br>The double agony for us<br>As man should undergo;                 |
| 3) O wisest love! that flesh and blood,<br>Which did in Adam fail,<br>Should strive afresh against the foe,<br>Should strive and should prevail; | 6) And in the garden secretly,<br>And on the cross on high,<br>Should teach his followers, and inspire<br>To suffer and to die.        |

*John Henry Newman CCL No. 515642*

### Prayer of Adoration

O Lord, love originates with you and is revealed by you. Your love is seen in creation; in the world around us we see an environment designed for life to flourish. Your love is seen in the way that you have designed people; you made us for yourself, that we might choose to be united with you and with our fellow members of the human family. Your love is shown supremely in your Son who came to earth for us. Through him, love pursues us, chases us down, challenges our objections and breaks down barriers of unyielding hearts. As we trust in him you overcome our sinfulness and restore our relationship with you.

We worship you with joy and hope, looking forward to that day when the perfection of your original creation will be restored. **Amen.**

### Prayer of Confession

Lord our God, our Saviour Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, yet did not sin.

When we rely on externals that can never satisfy while neglecting the words of life:

**Lord, forgive us.**

When we seek to dominate and control others for our own selfish purposes:

**Lord, forgive us.**

When we try to take short-cuts to promote ourselves rather than patiently working out your purposes:

**Lord, forgive us.**

The Lord our God wipes out our sins and remembers them no more. Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

## Reading: Luke 4:1-13 Jesus is tested in the wilderness

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.' Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man shall not live on bread alone."'

The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendour; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours.' Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only."'

The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down from here. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."' Jesus answered, 'It is said: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."'

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

## StF 235 – Christ our redeemer knew temptation's hour

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| 1) Christ our Redeemer knew temptation's hour<br>In desert places, silent and apart;<br>And three times over met the tempter's power<br>With God's word written, hidden in his heart. | 3) He will not ask the fickle crowd's acclaim,<br>Nor flaunt the Sonship which is his by right,<br>Nor seem distrustful of the Father's Name<br>Who bids us walk by faith and not by sight. |
| 2) He makes not bread what God has made a stone,<br>He at whose bidding water turns to wine:<br>We are not meant to live by bread alone<br>But as God speaks the word of life divine. | 4) He seeks no kingdom but by cross and grave,<br>For love of sinners spurning Satan's throne:<br>His triumph seen in those he died to save<br>Who, to his glory, worship God alone.        |

Timothy Dudley-Smith © Timothy Dudley-Smith CCL No. 515642

## Sermon

I delight in hearing testimony, the story of how God has worked in the life of another person. It builds faith and confidence in me. As George Beverly Shea used to sing at Billy Graham's evangelistic meetings: "What he's done for others, he can do for you." The part that I'm not so keen on is knowing that the word "testimony" starts with "test", and that this is applicable to people's life stories. Every testimony has its times of testing. This was true for Jesus as well as many other famous and celebrated Bible characters. Jesus had his time in the wilderness, as did Moses. David, knowing that he had been called and anointed to be King of Israel, spent years fleeing King Saul. Read through the psalms and you will find much along the lines of "I was in trouble but you rescued me". That's testimony, in the face of test!

For Jesus, this was a time of hunger and temptation to misuse his power and thereby transgress divine commands. The devil's temptations begin with "If you are the Son of God" and then provide suggestions of apparently how Jesus could achieve his objectives with minimum time and effort. Jesus sees through them and realises that there are no short-cuts. "If you are the Son of God", was the challenge, then why not do this or that in order to achieve your aims. I have no doubt that Jesus knew exactly who he was... but do we know who we are? We are not divine in the way that Jesus was as God's Son, but are we secure in the knowledge that we are children of God? We can be! If you have given your life to Jesus and accepted his finished work on the cross then you can be absolutely confident that you are a child of God. If you're not sure of this then invite Jesus to forgive your sins and be Lord of your life forever. Surrender your will to his perfect plan. James 4:7 exhorts us: *Submit to God. Stand up to the devil and he will turn and run.*

Jesus wasn't alone in his test. He had two companions: the Word and the Holy Spirit. So do we! Note that it was the Spirit who led him into the wilderness in the first place. Jesus was able to counter all the temptations of the devil with words of truth from Holy Scripture. I believe that in order for us to reach our destiny we need both the Word and the Spirit. The Spirit gives us understanding of the truth as we study the Bible. The Word (the Bible) is a tool provided by the Lord to help us fend off temptations and overcome trials. It also nourishes us and makes us strong, releasing the blessings of God on our lives. Let me suggest four ways of making the truths of scripture our own:

**READ** - Reading the Bible is important but only one tool of many. Reading the Bible is certainly beneficial, but there's more.

**STUDY** - Studying is a further step towards understanding. It can mean following a theme that is relevant to us and looking at what the Bible has to say on that topic. This is not primarily an intellectual exercise but is to help us to live right. It can often be helpful, for example, to study what the Bible has to say about an area of life that is relevant to us, or a particular issue that we need to overcome.

**MEMORISE** - Memorising particular verses is a way of storing up truths that we can then access in time of need. It is how Jesus was able to counter the temptations in today's reading. He quoted verses that he had already learned.

**MEDITATE** - Meditation simply means spending time with a verse or passage of scripture, turning it over and over in our minds and letting the truth sink in and become part of us. The Hebrew verb (hagah) used for "meditate" in Psalm 1 can literally mean to mutter. If we can keep the word of God on our lips then it can feed and nourish us. Using our minds and even our lips too, we can keep a verse of scripture with us all day, whatever we are doing.

Jesus received the help of the Word and the Spirit. He taught, as recorded in John's gospel, that the Holy Spirit leads us into all the truth, and he will make known to us those things that Jesus has taught us. He reminds us of the scriptural truths that we have learned. In studying and learning scripture we give the Spirit something to work on, for our benefit. The Spirit helps us to use the Word not only to overcome temptation, but also to dispel discouragement, fear and negative thinking. The Bible gives us truths that bring joy and give positive direction, leading to peace and victory and wellbeing, what the Bible calls Shalom. This is how our trials turn to victory, our setbacks become the springboard to blessing, our temptations become a path to overcoming. In this way our calling and potential becomes our destiny and our test becomes a testimony!

### **StF 395 – Spirit of the living God**

Spirit of the living God,  
Fall afresh on me.  
Spirit of the living God,  
Fall afresh on me.

Break me, melt me,  
Mould me, fill me.  
Spirit of the living God,  
Fall afresh on me.

*Daniel Iverson CCL No. 515642*

### **Prayers of Thanksgiving & Intercession**

Father God, you sent your Son to this world and allowed him to experience trials and tests of many kinds. We thank you that he remained faithful and that because of his obedience we are now clothed in your righteousness and assured of life for evermore. **Amen.**

We pray for your Church worldwide, that the message of forgiveness and freedom in Christ will go forth to those who need it most. We pray for those who feel that they are not good enough to be saved, that they would know the wonder of your grace. We pray for those who feel assured of their own self-righteousness, that they would be convicted of their need of you. We pray for those caught in a prison of addiction, that they would turn to the Saviour who releases them.

L: Your kingdom come      **R: Your will be done**

We pray for people who suffer under the domination of others, including Christians and members of other groups who are persecuted for their beliefs. We remember the abused and oppressed and exploited, including those who are trafficked to satisfy the greed of others. We pray for those who live in uncertainty and fear because they are caught up in local or international conflicts.

We pray for oppressors and dominators, that their power will be broken and that their hearts will be changed.

L: Your kingdom come      **R: Your will be done**

We pray for people who suffer in famine, whether the shortage is of food, clothing and shelter, or whether the famine is spiritual and there is lack of the word of God. We pray for Christians who live in parts of the world where Bibles are hard to obtain, especially for new converts who need solid teaching. Help us to value the Word of God more fully and to appreciate the wealth of resources that we have.

L: Your kingdom come      **R: Your will be done**

We pray for national and regional governments worldwide, for wisdom in tackling the problems of the world. We pray for people displaced by war or extreme weather, and for the relief agencies that help them. Where there is poverty and lack, may there be abundant resources and sustainable economic development.

We ask that you help our NHS and caring professions as they look after others and seek to hasten the end of the pandemic.

L: Your kingdom come      **R: Your will be done**

We pray for our local area and churches, especially for people known or unknown to us who are facing difficulties, sufferings or sorrows. Bring healing to the sick, assurance to the dying and comfort to the sorrowing. Where jobs and livelihoods are under threat, bring guidance and prosperity. We pray for teachers and parents who mould the next generation. Bless our ministers and congregations as we walk together with the One who holds the future in his hands.

L: Your kingdom come      **R: Your will be done**

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

## **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the  
glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

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 for ever. **Amen.**

## **StF 238 – Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us**

- 1) Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us  
O'er the world's tempestuous sea;  
Guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,  
For we have no help but thee,  
Yet possessing every blessing  
If our God our Father be.
- 2) Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us.  
All our weakness thou dost know,  
Thou didst tread this earth before us,  
Thou didst feel its keenest woe;  
Tempted, taunted, yet undaunted,  
Through the desert thou didst go.
- 3) Spirit of our God, descending,  
Fill our hearts with heavenly joy  
Love with every passion blending,  
Pleasure that can never cloy;  
Thus provided, pardoned, guided,  
Nothing can our peace destroy.

*James Edmeston CCL No. 515642*

## **Benediction**

May God's Word transform us and his Spirit guide us, granting us wisdom and staying power, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be among us and remain with us now and for ever.  
Amen