

Temptation

Richard Llewellyn *reflects on* Luke 4:1-13

When Jesus was baptised by John in the River Jordan, it was as if he was given his mandate to begin his mission. But how was he to go about the task that his heavenly Father had given him? We are taught that his temptations took the form of wrestling with various options of earthly power and glory, and that he rejected them in favour of the way of humility and self-sacrifice.

What leaps out of this story is that all the temptations were about greed of one kind or another. The first temptation, to “command this stone to become a loaf of bread”, would bring material wealth and resources. The second, offering Jesus “glory” and “authority” in “all kingdoms of this world”, would be a grab at earthly power. The third, an invitation to “throw yourself down” from the pinnacle of the Temple, would have been a headline-grabbing stunt that would bring fame and celebrity status.

What Jesus understands, is that once we give in to greed we become insatiable. Enough, and even more than enough, is never enough! The more we have, the more we are determined to have. Those who make millions want to make millions more.

So as we embark upon the season of Lent, let our prayer be for the wisdom and restraint to know that enough *is* enough. 😊



Lord, help us to remember that you have already given us all things. And yet we ask for just one more thing – grateful, humble and generous hearts. Amen.

The books of the Old Testament

Judges

by Gillian Cooper

The book begins with bad news and the stage is set for conflict, and for relationships and alliances which are, in the view of the authors, incompatible with faithful allegiance to the God of Israel.

We are treated to some extraordinary stories: of Jael and Deborah, Gideon and Abimelech. Samson’s inability to resist the lures of his cleverer wife Delilah results in his own death. Jephthah’s foolish vow and unwillingness to break it

doom his innocent daughter. If that story leaves a bad taste, how much more the fate of the unnamed concubine in chapter 19?

Despite the heroics of Deborah, Jael and Delilah, Judges makes uncomfortable reading for women. Having read the trailer in the final verse, perhaps we can hope that kings will bring in a more settled, age, when the wildest excesses of charismatic leaders can be contained.

And what of God in all this? Human nature is getting in the way of God’s plan for the salvation of the world. Israel has a lot to learn, and kings will provide the next lesson. 😊

Words from the cross, part 1 – a series for Lent

by Caroline Fletcher

Caroline Fletcher looks at the words Jesus spoke from the cross

“Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’” Luke 23:34

Have you ever been in terrible pain? If so you’ll know that it is all-consuming; it is very hard to think of anything or anyone else at such a time.

If your pain had been caused by another and caused deliberately, how would you respond? It would be only natural to feel anger, to want to lash out, to make the other person suffer, too.

Jesus’ terrible agony on the cross was caused by others. As he suffered, the soldiers who had nailed him up gambled for the very cloak they had snatched from his back. The people around, many of whom had called for his death, laughed and mocked him.

Yet the first words Jesus uttered from the cross were not self-pitying words of anger or vengeance. Incredibly, he thought of others: the very people who were hurting him, and begged God to pardon them.

This is love beyond measure, divine love. How fortunate we are to be loved by a God of such infinite mercy and grace! 😊

“Jesus has made himself the bread of Life to give us life. Night and day, he is there. If you really want to grow in love, come back to the Eucharist, come back to that adoration.”

Mother Teresa (1910-1997), Roman Catholic nun and missionary