

2/22/26  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent  
For Group Meetings from February 15<sup>th</sup> – February 21<sup>st</sup>

**OUR MISSION:** As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

**Prayer of the Day:** Lord God, our strength, the struggle between good and evil rages within and around us, and the devil and all the forces that defy you tempt us with empty promises. Keep us steadfast in your word, and when we fall, raise us again and restore us through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER:**

**Share:** How did last week's scripture (Matthew 17:1-9) work in your life this week?

**Mission:**

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

**Hear:** Matthew 4:1-11

**Explore Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What are the three temptations posed to Jesus?
2. What is Jesus' response to each temptation?
3. What finally causes the devil to leave, and what happens afterward?

**Connect Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What voices take up too much space in your head?
2. What stories of wilderness have you experienced? How was your faith affected during that time?
3. When are you tempted to prove your worth, competence, or faith to others, or to yourself?

**Memorize this verse:** "Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him." (Matthew 4:11) Who are the "angels" God has sent to care for you in difficult seasons?

**BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:**

**Obey:** During this week follow through on your intentions.

**Meditate:** Meditate on Psalm 32. How does this speak into your life?

**Reflect:** What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

**Notes for ChristCare leaders:**

No one wakes up one day and says: "You know who I'm going to be? I'm going to be one of those crazy people who paints my face, wears a costume, and goes wild at football games rooting for my team." Instead, you hang out with friends, watch lots of football, decide to go to a game, discover someone has brought body paint, and then all of a sudden realize you are one of those people! You could say the same about the women in purple and red hats at restaurants, or bikers, or Trekkies, or just about any of the other groups we associate with and from which we derive a lot of our identity. And that's what makes Baptism so powerful: we are adopted into a family of faith and told that we are God's beloved child and therefore have infinite worth. Yes, yes, you've heard that before. But can you really hear it too often? I mean, the good news we hear in worship that we are God's children, that God is with us, that God values and loves us and promises to use us. Well, depending on the way your week is going, this can be hard to believe by Sunday and, quite frankly, sometimes it seems pretty dubious by lunch on Monday. But what, you may be wondering, does Baptism have to do with this week's story about Jesus being tempted in the wilderness? Keep reading.

Just before this passage is the story of Jesus' baptism that we read about two months ago. And it is crucial to understanding how Jesus navigates this temptation. Because, when push comes to shove, all the various temptations we may encounter stem from the primary temptation to forgot whose we are and therefore to forget who we. Because once you don't remember who you and whose you are, you'll do all kinds of things to dispel the insecurity that attends any human life. That is Adam and Eve's problem in the Genesis story. When the serpent comes, he doesn't start out with a temptation but instead sows mistrust in Adam and Eve. In particular, the serpent tries to undermine the relationship of trust between God and God's children. "Did God really say," the serpent asks, misrepresenting and undermining God's instructions. "You will not die," the serpent asserts, suggesting that there are things God knows but isn't telling. Only when this primary relationship has been undermined are they susceptible to the temptation to forge their identity on their own, independent on their relationship with God, and so take and eat the forbidden fruit.

Jesus' encounter with the devil is, by contrast, nearly the opposite. The devil also tries to undermine Jesus' relationship with God by suggesting it is not secure, that he should test it by throwing himself off the mountain, or that he should go his own way by creating food for himself, or that he should seek the protection of the devil rather than trust God's provision. Yet at each point Jesus resists, not simply by quoting Scripture in general but by quoting Scripture that reminds him of God's trustworthiness, the need to depend on God for all good things, and consequently of God's promise to care for him and all God's children. Adam and Eve forget whose they are and so lose themselves in the temptation to secure their identity on their own. Jesus falls back on his relationship with God, reminding himself whose he is and so remembering who he is, a dependent, but beloved, child of God.

There are so many temptations in this world. Most of them coming not as apples hanging from a tree but rather subtle messages that seek to undermine our identity and invite us to forget whose we are. So many commercials suggest we are inadequate. So many headlines suggest that there is not enough to go around. And so many politicians contend that we have a great deal to fear. In the face of these identity obscuring messages, we are reminded of the baptismal promises that safe guarded and empowered Jesus. This is the baptismal promise that reminds us that God says we are enough, that there is plenty to go around, and that we need not live in fear. Our identity comes from the people with whom we hang out and is always received, rather than created. It comes always as a gift and a promise. Jesus temptation reminds us that you only know who you are when you realize whose you are.

**Thanks be to God,**

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

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*Traditional version:*

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, forever and ever. Amen

*Contemporary version:*

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