



Sunday, 1 March 2020 - First Sunday of Lent
Sermon for 10.00am Eucharist at St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Reading: St Matthew 4: 1-11
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

To serve or not to serve?

The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness is doubtless a very familiar reading to us. Maybe you can picture the scene in your minds' eye. The wily devil sitting on Jesus' shoulder pressurising him with every temptation of the material, the emotional and the power-hungry kind. Jesus withstands all temptation that would serve only to please his human persona rather than serving to please and do the will of his Father in heaven.

Divine defences

I wonder, though, how often do we focus on the three verbal defences that Jesus throws back at the devil that send him packing:

1. "One does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes for the mouth of God."
2. "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."
3. "Worship the Lord your God and serve only him."

These three are central tenets of our faith: nourishment, discipline and active service. How, though, can we be nourished by his words in ways that we can readily absorb and put into active service in daily living?

Nourished in body, mind and spirit

God created us to eat food, we know, however, that eating physical food only satisfies for a while. In a few hours' time we'll be back at the cupboard door looking for the next meal. What we need is food that is digestible, nourishes and sustains. Similarly, we need spiritual food that does likewise. So, let me take you on a culinary journey to explore these thoughts.

Recognition

Let's consider the Avocado Pear. The outer skin preserves the shape of the fruit making it instantly recognisable. However, if the fruit pulp was removed and put into a clear sealed container would we know the difference between avocado puree or wasabi mustard of similar colour? I had that unfortunate experience some years ago, forget the dragon, I could have given St George a good run for his money! Looks can be so deceiving exactly as in our world of misinformation, when people stream views on everything claiming them to be the watch words for our times, the Bible alone is authentic and identifiable. It contains all of the unvarnished accounts of human wilfulness and the patience of God, as he sought ever more loving ways to redeem

fallen humanity: his ultimate love being the gift of his Son born into human skin, so that we might recognise him.

Spiritual super-food

Recognising our source of nourishment is one thing but it is the flesh that we eat. Nutritionists tell us that an avocado is a super-food, as apparently, whatever our age avocado can be readily digested and is packed full of nutrients needed for growth, energy and healthy hearts. Just so with God's word, the ultimate spiritual super-food, which provides words that nourish every generation. Jesus, the living Word, taught in parables for children of every age enabling us to grasp his eternal truths as we grow and develop in faith. What we might have understood as a child acquires greater depth as we mature into adulthood stirring our hearts into active service if we discipline ourselves to strive to live by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Life from death

At the heart of the avocado is the stone: the seed from which new life can spring. The outer flesh, however, has first to be consumed in order for that new life to be planted and develop. That is exactly what our Lord and Saviour did by sacrificing his flesh in order for his resurrection body to burst forth with new life enabling us to be planted in eternity. At each Eucharist we feed and flourish on that promise and are sent out to serve others.

Discipleship defences

Spiritual nourishment, discipline and active service are the staples of faithful discipleship based on the very words that Jesus used as a defence against the wiles of the devil's temptations. Jesus' message is neatly contained in today's post-communion prayer, which reads:

Lord God,
you have renewed us with the living bread from heaven;
by it you nourish our faith, increase our hope,
and strengthen our love: teach us always to hunger for him
who is the true and living bread and enable us to live
by every word that proceeds from out of your mouth;

We all face similar temptations to Jesus. He conquered by his one desire to do the will of his Father. The question for us to ponder as we seek to be nourished through Lenten discipline is this: who are we living to please, ourselves or God?

Amen.