



St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Sunday, 6 March 2022 – First Sunday in Lent
Readings: Romans 10: 8b-13 and St Luke 4:1-13
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

Jumping in feet first or ...?

Do you recall the moment when you were poised to begin your first job of work? Were you Gung Ho! Ready to get stuck in? Or, did you feel a degree of apprehension, as to whether you were ready for your chosen path in life? In the gospel, we find Jesus poised to take on his earthly ministry and mission but instead of leaping into it, we heard, that 'Jesus full of the Holy Spirit returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness.' Why the wilderness? Surely, that's the last place to find the people who were in need of his ministry. We need to backtrack to remind ourselves of why Jesus had been to the Jordan. It was there that he had been baptised and, as the Holy Spirit descended on him God spoke out of heaven, 'You are my beloved Son with you I am well pleased.'

Learning to discern

I'm sure we were delighted when our parents told us that they were pleased with us but parental pleasure, is not necessarily the best barometer of what will please other people. We need to focus on how our heritage and chosen path in life forges our personality that will either help or hinder us to get alongside other people. Had Jesus launched straight into his ministry, his human-side could have been in danger of falling into pride at his Father's words or worse, feeling invincible. In the wilderness he had time to reflect on his strategy, on those he would select to accompany him and, time to prepare for the inevitable betrayal.

Facing temptation

Betrayal was quick to come. Enter the devil who utters a blasphemy. '**If** you are the Son of God ...' The devil casts doubt on the proclaimed word of God. Had we been in Jesus' place, our feathers would doubtless have been ruffled but Jesus does not lose command of himself. Instead, he draws on scripture parrying the temptation saying, 'It is written one does not live by bread alone.' We pray similarly in one of our responses at Parish Prayers each month: food is merely for the flesh; spiritual strength does not come from that but from Christ who is our true and living bread. The devil, hoping to pander to Jesus' vanity, tries again, 'Worship me and I'll give you all authority and power over the nations of the world.' Again, Jesus counters, 'It is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him"'. Not to be beaten the devil has a third go working on Jesus's psyche to undermine his trust in his Father's words, '**If**, you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple, his angels will rescue you.' Jesus again resists temptation stating,

'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' The devil knows only too well that Jesus **is** the Son of God, and thwarted, he departs but not for good, only 'until, an opportune time.' Now, here's the rub, the opportune time is to get us to do the devil's devious work for him. In Jesus' day those agents were some of the Pharisees, Herod, Pontius Pilate and at times his handpicked disciples. To Peter he said 'Get behind me Satan', when Peter tried to deflect Jesus from the path, he knew he would have to tread towards the cross. Later in the Gospels we learn that, 'the Devil entered Judas who went to discuss how he might betray Jesus'.

Spiritual resilience

It's wounding when people create a false account of our actions and when it's a friend who betrays us, the wound runs twice as deep. How tempting it is for us, with the benefit of knowing the gospels, of thinking we would not have fallen into the same trap as the disciples, that we'd be stronger in resisting the devil's machinations. Of course, we are every bit as vulnerable. Our challenge is to recognise temptation when it insidiously worms its way into our thoughts. How can we respond? Lent is a season of reflection to take stock of how much time we give to shore up our spiritual defences. Like Jesus we need to draw on scripture to give us resilience: to consider how frequently and effectively we devote time to studying the Bible. The trouble is, there are so many daily distractions that keep us from our good intentions, and, that's precisely what the devil is hoping to achieve in those 'opportune times'.

Commitment to succeed

The Bible is not the easiest read. To help me, I use daily reflections to keep me focused, as also a Lent reflections book. To be stronger in faith against temptation needs our commitment so that, as we prayed in the Collect, 'Almighty God, give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit; and as you know our weakness, so may we know your power to save; through Jesus Christ your Son Lord. This Lent, let's aim to note more assiduously when those opportune times occur in our lives and how we might resist them more effectively. Amen.