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26 February 2023 - First Sunday of Lent - Matthew 4.1-11

Jesus in the wilderness – no freedom without truth

Here in the 21st century we know perfectly well what hell is: Auschwitz, the worst tyrants in history destroying anything that is good; pointless degrading suffering and death caused by people, the muddy hell of a Soviet gulag, and so on. Or put it another way, hell is created by people acting against their consciences and engaging in actions that they/we know are wrong, and so betraying ourselves.

In the desert, Christ encounters the Key Holder to hell, Satan, who is arrogant, spiteful, deceitful, cruel and full of conscious malevolence, i.e. he wishes others to suffer and will show no empathy to humans. He therefore rejoices in people's misfortunes, and shows pure hatred of God; humanity and creation. It is he who faces the Christ with what he thinks all people most ardently desire, and so aims to add to hell's empire.

It is therefore entirely logical that Satan tempts Jesus with turning stone into bread, and so break his fast. Jesus rightly says, what's the use of bread if you betray your soul, the essence of who God created and loves, even if one is suffering? So, Christ says, there is something much higher to aim for in life.

The second temptation is another cheap trick. Jesus Christ knows that to throw away the gifts all of us have been given, independence, free will, courage and responsibility, and then treat God like a being who is either an unreal Superman or full of magic tricks, is self-destruction. So like the first temptation, Jesus is not going to ever consider diminishing himself.

One senses that the third temptation is Satan's trump card. Jesus Christ is offered – power unlimited, power with a privileged position, i.e. on top of the pinnacle of life. Christ knows that there is nothing to be gained from immediate gratification, no matter how powerfully and realistically people wrap it up. Christ knows he has chosen the path in which he is willing to sacrifice everything for the highest good, which is guided by love, speaking the truth and so living by God's word. He lives in this world, where absolutely nothing takes precedence over truth, for there is no freedom without the truth revealed by God.

Stephen

Sunday Morning Worship in Christ Well, and on Zoom, will be led by Rev Frieder Kreschak
Bible Reading : Matthew 4.1-11

Cycle of Prayer in the Swansea Region – we will pray for Uniting Church, Sketty.

You are invited to this Saturday's Quiet Day

Please note that the times are now 10.30 am to 1.30pm

Call in to the Church at anytime during these times for a time of personal reflection.

There will be Prayer Stations available for you to visit to help your prayer time, or you can simply sit in the sanctuary with God: *"Daily life is full of choices and challenges. Sometimes it's good to just go somewhere quiet, switch off the mobile phone and reconnect with the God who loves you and created you."* Taken from Retreat in my pocket by Mary Fleeson, Lindisfarne Scriptorium

This Saturday is also an opportunity to pray for the Church. If you aren't visiting the Quiet Day, please take some time on Saturday to have a quiet moment and pray for the Elders; for Simon as he prepares to join us in September; for Carol and the weekly activity in the Church, and for Adella and her work in the community.

Are you sympathetic to the plight of Refugees and Asylum Seekers?

Would you like to help, but don't know how to start?

Maybe you think you don't have the skills or experience to volunteer in this area or maybe you're not sure if it's for you or if you could cope with language barriers.

Unity in Diversity (UiD) is a small Swansea charity which for several years has provided support for Asylum seekers and Refugees in Swansea and are holders of a City of Sanctuary award. At our Drop-in session we offer all-comers a free hot meal, a free English lesson and a chance to socialise in a safe environment.

The socialising time is also helped by playing table games, working on a small sewing or colouring/art project or a variety of other activities or information input.

Could you help people play snakes and ladders, monopoly, or your favourite table game? or do some simple embroidery or patchwork? are you any good at washing up? or engaging children in play with toys or do some drawing?

These are the sorts of everyday things we need help with and they are a very good way to get started in this enjoyable and rewarding work. A friendly face is much appreciated by people who are working hard to come to terms with their new circumstances. We are looking for friendly, reliable people to help us with this work.

We meet at York Place Baptist Church SA1 (near St. David's car park and Vue Cinema) on Thursdays from 4pm – 7pm.



FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT – 27th FEBRUARY–12TH MARCH 2023

‘What does the Lord require of us, to act justly, and walk humbly with our God’ (Micah 6.8)

Small farmers especially in developing countries suffer from low prices for their products and frequent price swings. This makes it very difficult to plan, support their families and pay the children’s school fees. Trade can be a way out of poverty but unfair trade can keep people trapped in poverty.

Fairtrade was set up to combat this. Fairtrade pays a constant price for several years (usually above the world market price) so that it is easier for farmers to plan. They also pay a social premium that the community decides how to spend, e.g. on better equipment, a clinic, a school, increasing sustainability.

Christ Well is a Fairtrade Church and wherever possible use only Fairtrade products, and we can all support Fairtrade by buying their goods when we shop in the supermarkets.

May every Word of God be a Sanctuary

(Lectionary Readings: Genesis 2.15-17: Psalm 32: Romans 5.12-19: Matthew 4.1-11)

This Lent, we are called again to
live by your Word, not by bread alone.
May every Word of God be a sanctuary.

Saviour, when you we led into the wilderness by the Spirit,
for forty days and forty nights.
In such harsh conditions, the enemy saw a chance to tempt you.
Were your feet heavy with each step?
How did you bear the pain of each breath?
In hunger, the enemy offered instant pleasure.
In hunger, the enemy offered instant pleasure.
In weakness, the enemy offered power and popularity.
In desperation, the enemy offered a kingdom. Yet, you overcame.

People of God, when fasting, let us do so in Spirit and truth,
for this is also an expression of worship.
Whether tempted by food, notoriety or wealth;
insecurity, greed or pride.
Harden our resolve against deceit,
and send your angels to tend to us as we journey led by the Spirit.
May every Word of God be a sanctuary.

Amen.

Stephen Ansa-Addo
(URC Prayer Handbook 2023)

