

# Week 2 of Lent / the Great Lent

## 1. Gathering & Prayer

- Take a few moments to recall the previous session. What particularly touched you? What new insight about the human struggle, or divine grace, did you receive? Share as you wish.
- Opening Prayer, giving thanks for the insights and asking that our hearts may remain open to returning more fully to God.

Father, you have given us new life in your Son Jesus Christ and poured out your Spirit upon us. Renew us by the same Spirit and transform us into your image of Christ, that by the power of his love within us, others may come to know him as Saviour and follow him as Lord. Amen.

## 2. Coptic Orthodox Gospel

Theme: The Temptation Sunday

Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11



Duccio di Buoninsegna, c1250-1318: *The Temptation on the Mount*

### **Reflection:**

Once one takes one's spiritual life seriously, one will definitely face the devil's temptations. In Christ we will conquer as He conquered.

† What is your greatest temptation?

† What is the basis of that temptation?

† What does your strategy for dealing with temptation look like?

† Is your strategy based on human strength as in Genesis 3 or on God's strength?

### **Reflections on the Coptic Orthodox Gospel from a Protestant perspective**

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. (*Heb 4:15-16*)

Once one takes one's spiritual life seriously, one will definitely face the devil's temptations. In Christ we will conquer as He conquered. (Heshmat Keroloss)

It is interesting to draw some comparisons between the temptation and fall of humankind in Genesis 3 and the temptation and victory of Jesus in Matthew 4.

Humankind was tempted in a luxuriant garden with an abundance of food. Jesus was tested in the desert suffering hunger. Both were tempted with the allure of aggrandisement, of being the centre of life in lieu of centring their lives God and his commands.

Humankind's temptation involved a distortion of God's command. Jesus' temptation involved scripture, accurately stated, but completely out of context. Humankind's rebuttal of this involved adding to God's command. Jesus' rebuttal faithfully quoted God's word.

To me, the most significant difference in the two situations is the issue of relationship. The Genesis account uses the word *Elohim* in referring to God, quite at odds with the surrounding text that uses the word *Yahweh*. *Elohim* is a majestic portrayal of God rather than an intimate relational portrayal of God using the word *Yahweh*.

On each occasion where Jesus responds from scripture, the Old Testament text uses the word *Yahweh*. This focus on relationship with God is the key to overcoming temptation. We can be assured of temptation, but we can be assured of overcoming temptation.

### **3. Closing Prayer**

In silence, choose one feature from the time together and pray from it. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something that God thinks is particularly important. This may involve a feeling—encouraging or discouraging. It may be a word or gesture that has significance for you. Or it may be something that is emerging that seemed at the time rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether of intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

Some people may choose to share a word, or an insight, or a prayer: others may prefer to remain silent.

### **Say Together**

God of new life, through the waters of Baptism each and every one of us is called to be a minister of the Church. Renew our call so that with passion, new vision and zeal we may together journey towards growth as your Church. May we your faithful people be:—brave enough to proclaim the Good News, enthused enough to share our story, loving enough to only see the good in others, and kind enough that our actions reflect the light and hope of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In all we are and in all we do, let us give glory to the Father, Son and Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

You may wish to offer one other a sign of peace as this time draws to a close.