



First Sunday in Lent

The Great Litany

26 February 2023

**The Episcopal Church of the
Good Shepherd in Athens, Ohio**

Seeking to know and serve Christ
in loving service to the campus, the
community, and the world.

Today's printed [Order of Worship](#)

Lessons

Lessons for the First Sunday in Lent - The
Great Litany

Old Testament – Genesis 2: 15-17; 3: 1-7

Psalm – 32 (Sung)

New Testament – Romans 5: 12-19

Gospel – Matthew 4: 1-11



<https://www.lectionarypage.net>

The Collect

ALMIGHTY GOD, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Gospel



Matthew 4:1-11

JESUS was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written,

'One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

'He will command his angels concerning you,'
and 'On their hands they will bear you up,

so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

'Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him.'"

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Gospel Engagement Question:

Why do you think angels appeared and served Jesus in the wilderness after

the temptations were over?

The Sermon

When Jesus Was Led into Temptation

One day, Jesus' disciples asked him to teach them how to pray. In response, Jesus taught them a prayer that is still used in every church service and prayer service to this day. We call it the Lord's Prayer. One of the lines from that prayer asks God to refrain from leading us into temptation and to deliver us from evil. We might wonder if the events from today's Gospel where Jesus was led into the wilderness in order to be tempted by the devil might have influenced his inclusion of that line in the prayer. Which might lead us to ask why Jesus experienced something he didn't wish on anyone else. It might also reveal that event was something Jesus never forgot. His time in the wilderness was significant; it was probably also strenuous, difficult, and seems an unlikely next step after the beauty and dramatic presence of God at Jesus' baptism.

Remember, when Jesus was baptized, the sky opened up, the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove and a Voice proclaimed, "This is my Son, the beloved, with him I am well pleased." After this, we might think the next thing to do was celebrate. Throw a party. Enjoy some delicious cake. Give Jesus and everyone else time to bask in the glory of God's pronouncement. But that isn't what happened.

Instead, today's Gospel tells us the Holy Spirit led Jesus directly into a lonely place without friends or family or disciples or teachers. Whether or not there was food, he chose to fast for a long time. When he must have been at his most vulnerable, the devil showed up to tempt Jesus.

The word translated tempt or temptation can also be translated to test. When the devil showed up in that lonely place, he didn't bring a number two pencil and paper so Jesus could complete some standardized test to prove he knew enough to be the Son of God. The test of the devil was to reveal who Jesus is and what it means to be the Son of God.

All three of the devil's temptations are really testing the same thing: they are asking Jesus to prove he is God's Son by proving his divinity. But Jesus isn't only divine, Jesus is also human, and in the testing in the wilderness he revealed how good that can be.

It is often assumed that being human is bad. Perhaps you have heard

someone say, "I am only human" when deflecting accountability for a mistake or selfish act. In that case, the phrase means we can't help doing bad things, so just accept it and don't expect much else. Other times the term can mean we have limits and when pushed beyond our limits we will break, get sick, or hurt. While it is healthy to understand limits and boundaries, there is still the inference that being human is to be less than good. The concept of humanity's default condition as bad or corrupt comes from many people and institutions throughout history. One of which is the church itself that points to the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden disobeying God as proof that humans are inherently flawed.

The theological problem with this concept -- as many theologians and Church Doctors from history have pointed out -- is it ignores the Biblical truth that God *never* pronounced humanity flawed. When God created humanity, God pronounced us good. Of course, that doesn't mean we as individuals or groups always choose well. Sometimes we forget our goodness and choose selfishly and poorly, which is where the deeply harmful beliefs and practices of the world like racism, sexism, white supremacy, injustice, violence, and all the others come from. But Jesus' test revealed it doesn't have to be that way. Because Jesus remembered the goodness of humanity when he was tempted in the wilderness.

Each temptation Jesus faced was an attempt by the devil to convince him to get to work and take all the savior of the world matters into his own hands instead of trusting God to be with him no matter what happened. It's a subtle temptation that isn't obvious at first. The temptation to miracle himself some bread to alleviate his hunger, to create a spectacle that would bring attention and likely fame, wealth, and power, and to trust the one who is very skilled at pointing out the proof of humanity's evils are all about abandoning God instead of trusting God. Each temptation suggested Jesus take control of his life because he should not have to live a hard life of rejection or suffering, like all other human beings. After all, he is God's beloved Son, and God wouldn't want pain or injustice for God's own Son. Because of Jesus' divinity, he was certainly too good to suffer.

It sounds so reasonable; so easy to believe. I'm sure God doesn't desire anyone to suffer pain, but when this is used to justify all sorts of behaviors and choices, especially those that harm or exploit people to protect a group or individual from suffering, it implies a belief that God is untrustworthy because God made humans inherently bad and therefore, we cannot help but do harmful things. So, we must protect ourselves by taking control of our lives and the lives of others.

Jesus revealed the lie behind this temptation by choosing to trust God. In the wilderness, when he was hungry, weak, and vulnerable, the Son of God did not discard his humanity like some filthy thing he was ashamed of. He embraced it by embracing what is good about it: the intrinsic ability to choose God, to choose to love God even when it doesn't make sense. Jesus revealed his divinity by embracing his humanity by trusting God because he

remembered humans are created for good, to be in relationship with God. In so doing, Jesus shows trusting or depending on God is a strength, not a flaw.

Maybe when Jesus included the line about being spared temptation in the Lord's Prayer he intended to help us remember what makes us good, that we are created in God's image, and no matter what life or the devil throws at us, we can always choose to trust God.

As we begin the season of Lent, it can be tempting to think of it as a time to focus on how bad we as individuals and humanity can be; that we are corrupt because we are, after all, only human. Some might interpret the Great Litany we prayed at the beginning of the service as evidence supporting our sinful nature. But all the petitions could also be read as reminders that we can do better than we have because it is possible, not because we are fundamentally weak and flawed, but because we are made in God's image to be in relationship with God. We are fundamentally good, created to trust God whether we are excited, happy, and content or when we get tired, hungry, frightened, angry, sad, and even when we despair. Trusting God doesn't mean being unrealistically optimistic, it means trusting God can redeem any situation, even a tragic one. It means God can heal even the most horrible of divisions. Trusting God doesn't mean we are inactive, it means we try to work with God, resisting the urge to take over and to work along with existing systems and people to follow God's will.

Lent can be an invitation to remember our goodness. That is the intention behind taking on a discipline during Lent; cultivating new habits to help us live closer to God.

I know there is a lot of bad and frightening news. The truth is, there always is bad news, and the temptation can be to believe the lie that bad news is all there is. Thank goodness we have a season that doesn't deny the bad but reminds us that is not all there is. There is all of us, our lives, the lives of those around us, our neighbors, and there is God, always present. Sometimes we might even notice when God shows up, like an angel in the wilderness, when we remember we were made for goodness.

A sermon by The Rev. Deborah Woolsey, , 26 February 2023, at The Church of the Good Shepherd, Athens, Ohio.

Sermon Engagement Questions:

Is the idea that humanity was created to be good a difficult one for you?

Why or why not?

Please include in your prayers

IN OUR WORLD, we pray for Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury, and for Michael, our Presiding Bishop; we pray for peace with justice throughout the Middle East. We pray for all families and law enforcement affected by gun violence. We pray for the victims of the coronavirus. We pray for all people affected by natural and environmental disasters. We pray for the people who are suffering from war, especially the people of Ukraine, and we pray for all asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees. We pray for Joe our President, Kamala our Vice-President, Mike, our Governor, the Supreme Court and the members of Congress.

IN OUR DIOCESE, we pray for our Provisional Bishop Wayne, the search process for a new bishop, and for Kenneth, Nedi, and Wendell our assisting bishops.

IN OUR PARISH, we pray for Good Shepherd's continued growth, for our Rector Rev. Deborah Woolsey, for our Associate Priests, Rev. Leslie Flemming, and Rev. David McCoy, for our ministry to students, the university, and the community.

THOSE WHOM OUR PRAYERS ARE REQUESTED: Al S., Bud and Carol, Chris L., Connie D., Gloria R., Jean R., Lia, Miriam, Sharon, R.C., Ann Carswell, Zelma Coleman, Lee Kembell-Cook, Richard DeNune, Roy DePue, Norm Fox, Lindsey and Regina Golden, Debbie Hunsberger, Bob and Nancy Jackson, John Jefferson, Peter Kachenko and family, Ann Lloyd, Christine McGinn, Jeff Maiden, Julie Nehls, Betty Oltorf, Donald Oney, Sandy Oney, Dan and Nancy Reedy, Virginia Richards, Flo and Jack Roach, Annette Secoy, Dale Showman, Michael Vaughn, Mary-Anna Welch, and we pray for all who care for them. **

BIRTHDAY: Chris Coleman (2/28), Sandy Oney (2/28), Ted Foster (3/1), Zelma Coleman (3/2), Thaden Brient (3/3), Laura Dukes (3/3)

ANNIVERSARY: Dick and Phyllis Dean (3/3)

** Full names are normally not published online. However for the Sunday 10:30 service we will publish full names unless requested otherwise. If you have a name to be added to the prayer list, Lynn Graham maintains this information. Lynn may be reached at **740-593-5098** or grahammowery@aol.com.

At-Home Worship

Christ Church Cathedral Cincinnati live streams its services Sundays at 10 a.m. These are saved and can be watched anytime later.

<https://cincinnati-cathedral.com/ccc/join-online/>

Washington D C -- there's much to explore at the the National Cathedral's online portal. <https://cathedral.org/worship/>

Coming up on the Calendar

Tuesday, February 28, 9:30 a.m. - - Prayer Shawl Meeting (Nehls Hall)

Wednesday, March 1, 12:30 p.m. -- Compassion and Faith (Nehls Hall)

Sunday, March 5, 9:15 a.m. - - Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, March 5, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist

Wednesday, March 8, 12:30 p.m. -- Compassion and Listening (Nehls)

Sunday, March 12, 9:15 a.m. - - Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, March 12, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist

Tuesday, March 14, 9:30 a.m. - - Prayer Shawl Meeting (Nehls Hall)

Wednesday, March 15, 12:30 p.m. -- Compassion and Prayer (Nehls)

Thursday, March 16, 7:00 p.m. - - Vestry Meeting

Sunday, March 19, 9:15 a.m. - - Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, March 19, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist (Discretionary Sunday)

Wednesday, March 22, 12:30 p.m. -- Compassion and Mercy (Nehls)

Sunday, March 26, 9:15 a.m. - - Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, March 26, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist

Sunday, March 26 (Time TBA) - - AGO concert 1st Presbyterian Church

Tuesday, March 28, 9:30 a.m. - - Prayer Shawl Meeting (Nehls Hall)

Wednesday, March 29, 12:30 p.m. -- Compassion/Well-Being (Nehls)

Coffee Hour Schedule

March 5	Lois Wagner
March 12	Lynn Graham
March 19	Alex Buckley
March 26	Dana Carlson

Taken Dates for Altar Flowers

During Lent there are no flowers and for Easter we will have an announcement for lilies.

[To Altar Flower Procedure](#)

Notes & Announcements (additional items in the Friday Bulletin)

Welcome to the Season of Lent

The church follows its own calendar, and with Ash Wednesday transitioned into a new season. Lent is a forty-day season that originated in the very early days of the church. Long before the Middle Ages, the early church had many struggles, one of which was periodic persecution which threatened the church's existence. One form of persecution was anyone who identified as a Christian was targeted by the Roman government and could be arrested because of their faith, because it was against the law to follow any religion except for that of Rome. While under arrest, Christians were tortured until they renounced their faith. If they didn't, they were either thrown in prison or killed. Because of the threat, many Christians did renounce their faith.

The persecutions came and went depending on Roman leadership. When the persecutions were over, many Christians who had renounced their faith decided to return to the church. This proved both problematic and opportunistic for the Christians who had not renounced their faith, despite the risks. They were not sure how to welcome back those who had renounced their faith, which was in that time a very serious problem. These were not Christians who had not been to church in a while, these were individuals who had publicly vowed to follow another faith and disavowed their belief in Christ. The early church believed for those who had taken such drastic measures to be reconciled with the Body of Christ, they needed a season of penitence. Not as a form of punishment but a time of reflection to help them decide if they really wanted to rededicate their life to Christ.

In the Spirit of the Body of Christ, the early church members who had not renounced their faith participated in that season of penitence with those seeking reconciliation. In addition, they used this season to instruct those who were new to the faith. The season culminated with a glorious celebration of Jesus' resurrection at the Great Vigil of Easter where everyone new and returning was welcomed into the full Body of Christ.

Over the centuries, the church has kept this season of penitence. Even though we no longer have the problem of those who renounced their faith wanting to return, we still struggle with maintaining a balance between how we follow Christ which can be counter to our modern culture that values dollars over people and measures and rewards success differently. Sometimes even the most faithful need a season of prayer and reflection like Lent.

To reflect the change of season, in person church attenders will notice the worship space has changed its color and the altar and priest now wear purple. The color purple reminds us Jesus is a different kind of king from that of the world. The music, readings from the Bible, and prayers will have a penitential theme. We refrain from saying the word *alleluia* in the church services in Lent, because it is a word of celebration, and will save it for our Easter celebration.

Whether you attend in person services or not, the invitation to observe a holy Lent is for all people. If you have not been to in person services in a while, this is a good time to return. You can also take on the practice of reading the Bible daily, or daily prayers, or reading a special devotional for Lent. There are many ways you can share in the gift and opportunity of this season; we invite you to join us.

Something to Look Forward To

A March Lenten Program - - "Practicing Compassion"

Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m. (Nehls Hall downstairs)

[TO MORE DETAILS](#) Please consider joining us.

For Bishop Transition News and Updates

[-- Follow this link --](#)

If you want to help the folks who have been negatively impacted by climate disaster and war anywhere in the world (including Ukraine) please consider contributing to [Episcopal Relief and Development \(ERD\)](#) which is the official ministry of the Episcopal Church.



This afternoon turned out nice and sunny -- good for the daffodils and for shadows on the church steps.





Contacts, Information

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[Link to the DSO guidelines
for in-person worship](#)

In light of local conditions we request all persons wear masks inside the church building **regardless** of vaccination status.

Office Hours: 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Masks are required.

The **Church Building** is not open for public meetings and gatherings but during office hours the thrift shop and chapel are available for individuals. Masks are required.

CrossRoads Café is temporarily closed.

Contact Information

For pastoral needs, please contact The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895 (cell) or 740-593-6877 (church), or by e-mail at revdebwoolsey@gmail.com.

To find out more about Good Shepherd and other matters, please contact Alex Buckley, Senior Warden, at 740-593-5513 or by e-mail at macbuck@yahoo.com.

For maintenance matters, please leave a note at the office or contact Dana Carlson, Junior Warden, at 740-664-2022 or by e-mail at

[DONATE to Good Shepherd](#)

The above takes you to the Parish page where you can find instructions or donate on-line via PayPal, If you have a preference, please indicate on the the "Add special instructions to the seller" section the purpose of the donation -- e.g. organ fund, plate collection, etc.

carlsondana@hotmail.com.

For emergencies, please call
The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at
937-689-8895.

NON-emergency messages
can be left on the church's
answering machine (740-593-
6877).

The parish office
administrator is Barbara
Martin (740-593-6877) or
barbara@chogs.org.

The Episcopal Church of the
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740-593-6877
chogs@chogs.org
www.chogs.org

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Office Hours:
Masks are required.

10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Monday - Thursday
740-593-6877
chogs@chogs.org

Blessings !

Church of the Good Shepherd | 64 University Terrace, Athens, OH 45701

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