

A sermon preached by Emma Hodge at St,
Michael & All Angels Church, Sandhurst on Sunday
9th March 2025. 1st Sunday in Lent

Theme: Beating Temptation

Readings: Genesis 3:1-7

Luke 4:1-13

May the words of my lips and the thoughts of all our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight O Lord our strength and our Redeemer

Our theme today is "Beating Temptation". Our two readings are both stories of people being tempted. In our Old Testament reading from Genesis, Satan tempted Adam and Eve and they failed the test and finishes before God gives Adam and Eve the consequences of their failing to resist the devil's temptation. Our gospel reading is about Jesus being tempted by the devil at the start of his ministry.

However before we go any further I want to ask you a couple of questions

What does Temptation mean to you?
What tempts you away from God?

The Cambridge Dictionary defines temptation as **"the wish to do or have something that you know you should not do or have."** While temptation is not just limited to a Christian life, and everyone can

fall victim to temptation today we are looking at how it applies to our lives as followers of Jesus. As people who try and follow Jesus and God's teaching, then temptation is anything, or anyone who leads us away from this.

What tempts us away from God will be different for each one of us. It might be that you intended to spend time reading the bible but instead we feel tired and instead curl up and watch TV. It might be that you intended to buy fair-traded coffee but non-fair-trade was on offer or..... Following God is in all areas of our lives

Now we have looked at what temptation is, let's look at our Gospel reading where Jesus was faced with three different temptations by Satan

1) Firstly, the devil tempted Jesus with food. Jesus had been fasting for a period of time before being tempted by the devil with an option to satisfy a very human desire, that of hunger. The temptation was not just that bread would magically appear but that Jesus would use his divine power to satisfy his earthly needs.

2) Secondly the devil tempted Jesus with power – the devil tried, and failed to tempt Jesus by offering him the nations of the world , that they would belong to Jesus.

3) the last Temptation that the devil gave to Jesus was that of putting God to test. This may sound a bit strange but this links to our doubts, those times in our lives when we question everything and it is here that the devil wins.

Now with the devil tempting Jesus, it wasn't just a case of "have this" there were conditions and Jesus countered all of them by using God's word against them

The devil is not just a character in the bible, and is not always easily identifiable as a red horned figure or dragon as is shown in our window, The devil or Satan, if you need reminding turn around and look at the window above the font, the devil is depicted as a dragon and being thrown out of heaven by St. Michael.



The dragon is only one of the devil's disguises, the devil is a master of disguise and uses many other ways to tempt us to follow him and not God. After all, if we saw a dragon or the popular image of the devil in red clothes, horns and a pitchfork we would think twice and suspect a scam or false information, but instead the devil uses a wide variety of techniques and disguises as the devil is anything that leads us away from God and following him and his instructions in all, yes all, areas of our lives. The devil is described in 2 Corinthians 11 as masquerading as an angel of light showing just how hard the devil tries to tempt us away from God.

This is the temptation that we need to be aware of and avoid in our lives. So my next question is

[How do you resist or beat temptation?](#)

There are different ways in which we can beat temptation,

This sermon is not the only time we mention temptation, every time we say the Lord's prayer we say "and lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil"

The Lord's prayer is a prayer that we were taught by Jesus to say, and depending on our practices everything from saying it multiple times a day, to saying it during our Sunday services. These lines from the Lord's prayer is acknowledging that life

isn't easy and we are going to have times where we are tempted to turn away from God, to turn away from not prioritising God and it is the acknowledging that there is evil in the world.

Saying the Lord's prayer is just one way we can help beat temptation especially if we take the time to reflect on each line as we say it, however it is not the only way we can beat temptation to go away from God but fellowship, bible study, prayer can all help. Different techniques and strategies help different people in different situations, there is no quick fix, one size fits all solution.

Jesus beat the temptation that the devil gave him by quoting scripture, and having favourite bible passages we turn to when temptation approaches you is a really good way of beating temptation.

Whatever works for you but the most important thing is that you are not alone, fellowship with other Christians, both informally and at services is a way of helping to beat temptation. However fellowship with other people is only part of not being own, we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us stay true and close to God; we have God's word, the bible, and we have God, who is on our side and is longing for us to have a close relationship with Him, and he helps us.

Whichever way or ways works for us to try and beat temptation and however alluring the temptation is, we should remember that the devil does not win,

he is overthrown, St. Michael fights the devil on our behalf and throws him out of heaven where God says in Revelation 12 "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah, for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death."



It is this picture, that Jesus our Messiah came to earth, to die for us, to rise again. Jesus is the lamb

referred to in Revelation and it is through his blood, shed for us on the cross, that the devil does not win, we can all help each other and ourselves to beat temptation, to beat the devil who wants to lead us away from God, by remembering that God sent his only son, Jesus to pay the ultimate price and died for us on the cross and rose again, all because in the words of St. John "For God so Loved the World that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him would not perish but have life everlasting"

Let us all join together to help one another to beat the devil, and temptation and to live as Christ calls us to live

As we sit let us pray

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was tempted in every way as we are, yet did not sin; Grant that by your word and spirit we may be enabled to beat the temptations we face and to triumph over every evil and to live no longer for ourselves alone but for him who died and rose again for us, Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen**