

Lent 1

CCW 5th March 2017

Genesis 2 v15-17; 3 v1-7
Romans 5 v12-19

Psalm 32
Matthew 4 v1-11

Who's ever played the game Simon Says?

SS put your hands on your knees.

SS fold your arms.

SS pull your ears, touch your nose. You know what the rules are but sometimes you get so distracted or busy or just too lazy to follow them. Sometimes you just chose not to follow them.

This is a bit like temptation. You actually know what's right and what's wrong but just this once.... It won't really matter, will it?

And temptations can be either very subtle or very direct – as we heard in our 2 Bible readings (Genesis and Matthew). In Genesis, Eve was tempted by being deceived, the devil was very subtle. In the beginning, humans lived in direct relationship with God. There was plenty of food, no fear, no sadness – Paradise with only one rule. A bit like Simon Says, just one simple rule – don't eat from the tree of knowledge. And that's all it took for the temptation to take hold. 'Did God really say...' putting doubt where there was none previously, undermining the relationship, the trust between God and humanity. One simple rule to adhere to and perhaps we could still have been living in Paradise.

But compare this to the other story we heard of temptation. The situation couldn't have been more different, yet it still involved food, and the barest of necessities at that. Jesus was at the end of a time of preparation for the beginning of his ministry. He had fasted for 40 days and nights living in the desert - he certainly was not in Paradise. Again the temptation was one of deceit, 'if

you are the Son of God... if you are the Son of God...' and the promise of kingdoms which the devil didn't have power over anyway. And yet Jesus passed the test. Adam and Eve had perfect conditions and yet failed.

What was the difference? Native American Indians have a folk story about temptation and describe it as having 2 dogs living inside you: one mean and nasty: one good and faithful. The mean dog fights the good dog all the time. When asked which dog wins, they will say whichever dog is fed the most.

What we must avoid doing is manufacturing situations which would try and force God to act in a particular way. It's one thing to look for God's protection if you accidentally trip over something while walking, it's another thing to jump off from a great height to try and force God to rescue you. We all have the opportunity to obey or to disobey. We can choose.

9am Jesus' strength came from his knowledge of Scripture, keeping him close to what God wanted for him (and subsequently for us). Our strength must also come from studying Scripture and prayer and choosing God's path for us in this life.

10.30am Bear this in mind when we come to the baptism part of our service – there are words here that hold great weight and great promise both for ourselves and for Charlie as he grows up and comes to make his own choices about following Christ.

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/who-says.html>

<https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/matthew-41-11-jesus-satan-and-temptation-thomas-h-sermon-on-sin-fall-of-man-162408?page=2>

[A Bindle of Laughs: John and Stibbe](#)