



ST. MARY'S
ON THE HIGHLANDS

The First Sunday in Lent



Lent I, February 22

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.

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.

Lent I, February 22

“SERVE ONLY HIM.”

By Bert Amason



“Worship the Lord your God and serve only Him.” We should all take this time of Lent to recognize that we are assaulted by many temptations- hourly, daily, and weekly. We are assaulted so frequently that we often do not even recognize many of these things as “temptations.” I know that we as Christians need to reflect on these temptations in our lives, especially during Lent. Like Jesus in the wilderness, we are in the wilderness of the secular modern world. We are often spiritually “fasted” by the secular world and its temptations. We also need to acknowledge that we are weak against these temptations, especially in light of the numerous ones we face in our modern lives. Let’s take this time of Lent to quiet our minds, block out the temptations we face, grow closer to Jesus, and ask Him to save us from our sins. Let’s take this time of Lent to draw closer to God. Let’s take this time of Lent to be at peace with ourselves and those around us. Let’s take this time of Lent to remind ourselves that we should live on “every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Let’s take this time of Lent to remember not to test God with our actions. Let’s take this time of Lent to worship the Lord, our God, and serve Him only.

With the noise of the world quieted, listen for the voice of God. He is with us always. We just need to listen. Amen.

Lent I, February 22

Hymn 140 “Wilt thou forgive that sin”

Wilt thou forgive that sin, where I begun,
which is my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive those sins through which I run,
and do run still, though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
for I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin, by which I won
others to sin, and made my sin their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
a year or two, but wallowed in a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
for I have more.

I have a sin of fear that when I've spun
my last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son
shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore.
And having done that, thou hast done,
I fear no more.

Hymn 140
“Wilt thou forgive that sin, where I begun”
Words: John Donne (1573-1631)
Tune: *Donne*, melody John Hilton (1599-1637)



Click the image to listen.

Lent I, February 22

DONE, NOT DONE

By Andrew Morgan



During Lent, I sometimes feel as though I am being asked to focus on myself a bit too much. Especially those parts that I don't especially like. I think about what I am giving up. I think about what I should have given up but didn't. The services seem to be filled with "I" and "me", "our" and "we." We are but dust. My sin is always before me. Self-examination, self-denial, acknowledging our wretchedness...

Donne's text reminds me that to meditate on sin rightly is to be overwhelmed by grace. The further he descends - his own sins repeated, the sins of others inspired - still further does God's love abound. His feelings of sadness, joy, faith, and disbelief are echoed in Hilton's haunting setting. When you or I ask questions in ordinary speech, our voices naturally go up in pitch. Donne's poem is filled with questions, and yet each line of Hilton's melody ends with a descending tone.

The season of Lent invites us to explore contradictions better felt than understood. Sin impossible to comprehend, forgiven. Fear impossible to overcome, relieved. Doubt impossible to answer, quieted. Donne's repetition of "done...not done" makes this tension explicit. The mystery of grace is that by the time I realize how far I am from God, I am already closer than I could have imagined. It is this very closeness that enables us to see the distance, the distance that enables us to see the closeness.

Donne grapples with this mystery in the final stanza, when he admits his greatest fear is that in the end he will be lost. But by this very admission ("having done that") he discovers he has already been found ("[T]hou hast [Donne]"). Once again, he will fear no more.