



BREAKING OPEN

Scripture Study



Trust after the Mountain

Dennis Webster

A weekly reflection based on the teachings at St Peter's by the Lake, Paynesville, together with a study guide based on the readings, some liturgical resources RCL Lectionary, and a weekly devotion

Revised Common Lectionary Related

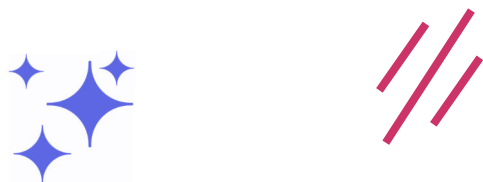
The First Sunday of Lent

Genesis 2.15-17; 3.1-7

Psalm 32

Romans 5.12-19

Matthew 4.1-11



Made with the assistance of AI,
including Grammarly® and ChatAtlas GTP5
Canva – Affinity Publisher and
Ulysses, and
church.tech

Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collects

Lord,
who for our sake didst fast
forty days and forty nights;
Give us grace to use such abstinence, that,
our flesh being subdued to the Spirit,
we may ever obey thy godly motions in
righteousness and true holiness,
to thy honour and glory:
who livest and reignest with the Father
and the Holy Ghost,
one God, world without end.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever noticed how temptation rarely comes dressed in obvious evil, but rather in reasonable self-reliance?

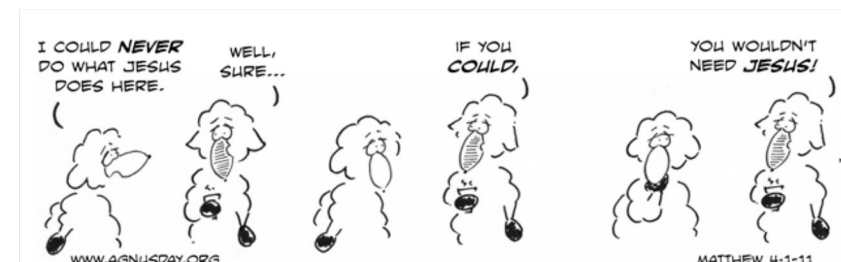
The core of temptation isn't about choosing between good and evil, but about whether we will trust God or attempt to secure our own lives.

Consider the perspective that illuminates how Jesus' refusal to "become his own saviour" opens a new way of being human – one marked by trust rather than self-sufficiency.

This message speaks directly to our daily struggles with bills, appointments, unsettling news, and tired bodies, where the whisper to "solve it yourself" feels so reasonable.

As our church community journeys through Lent, we're challenged to practice trust in the ordinary moments, remembering that we're being drawn into Christ's way of living.

The urgent invitation is clear: wherever we're tempted to live independently, we must learn to echo Jesus' unwavering trust in the Father's love.



As we walk lightly on sacred ground,
teach us Lord to make known your kingdom,
and let this reflect in all that we do and say.

Trust after the Mountain

We have come down the mountain.

Only a short time ago, there was light, brilliance, the voice that said, "This is my beloved Son."
Clarity. Glory. Assurance.

We recall how Peter has seen splendour and wants to preserve it.
"Let's build. Let's keep this. Let's remain."
It is a beautiful impulse. Loving. Devoted.

But it is still the longing to hold on, to keep what slips through our fingers, instead of opening our hands for what the Father gives next. Sometimes the gift is the hush of morning, a gentle word, the quiet peace that finds us when we are not looking. These are the graces that tell us God is near, even when the mountain is far behind.

The mountain cannot be lived in. Faith must descend.

If Peter could hold the glory in place, he would not have to trust the path Jesus is walking.

On the mountain, Peter is not wicked. He is overwhelmed by glory and wants stability. Building tents quietly signals hesitation to accept the next call to trust, and it reflects a love that tries to hold onto what ultimately cannot be kept. (Lori 2016) ("Living in Tents: Abraham's Faith Journey Metaphor" 2023)

Which is precisely what the first Adam does, and precisely what Jesus refuses in the wilderness.

And now?

Dust. Hunger. A long walk into the plainness of ordinary days.

The Church, in her wisdom, will not let us linger in the brightness. Lent draws us down from the heights into the rhythm of ordinary days, where faith is not only for the moments when God feels close, but for the places where trust is all we have.

So the Spirit leads Jesus — not accidentally, not tragically, but deliberately — into the wilderness. And there, the question comes.

If you are the Son of God...

Notice what is happening. This is not really about bread. It is not really about angels. It is not really about kingdoms.

It is about whether Jesus will trust the Father, even when the Father seems far away.

In Genesis, the ancient story tells of another testing. A garden. Abundance. Nothing lacking. And yet the serpent plants a seed of suspicion:

Did God really say?
In other words:
Can you trust God's generosity? Or must you secure your life yourself?

The fruit is good. The desire is understandable. But the choice unravels everything.
They reach.
They grasp.
And trust falls away.

Paul, writing in Romans, looks at that moment and says:
there you see the pattern of the old humanity.
When anxious, take.
When uncertain, secure yourself.
When vulnerable, stop trusting.

Adam is not simply a man from long ago.
Adam is us.

Now look at Jesus in the wilderness.

He is hungry. He is tired. He has every right to prove something.

And the tempter even quotes Scripture. Very religious. Very reasonable.
"Take the shortcut.
Force God's hand. Establish your security."
But Jesus refuses. Why?

Because life with the Father cannot grow from mistrust.

The tempter whispers, "Stand on your own."
Jesus answers, "I stand with the Father."
And in that standing, something in us is made whole.

Where Adam grasps, Jesus receives.
Where Adam doubts, Jesus rests.
Where Adam hides, Jesus stands in the Word.

Paul calls this obedience.
And he says in Christ a new humanity begins.

Here is the line that has echoed in my heart for years.

Temptation is rarely about evil things.
It is about good things offered in ways that quietly exclude God.

I remember a colleague in ministry speaking with real sadness
about her family.
They were decent people. Kind people. Successful people.
Comfortable.

And she said, "They simply have no need of God."
Not rebellion. Not hostility. Just sufficiency.

And perhaps that is the quietest wilderness of all.

Because if I can secure my future, manage my risk, build my
identity, protect my comfort, then what exactly is trust for?
Without trust, there is no love. Not with God. Not with each other.

The tragedy of Eden is not the fruit. It is the beginning of a life
where we believe we must carry ourselves alone.
The wonder of the wilderness is that Jesus will not choose that
life. He will not become his own saviour. He will remain the
beloved Son.

And here is hope as Lent begins. Paul does not say, Try harder not
to be Adam. He says, You are being drawn into Christ. A new way
of being human opens before us. Drawn into Christ, where we
learn, slowly and imperfectly, to trust God, to trust one another,
and, by grace, to let go of our need to defend ourselves. Drawn
into Christ, echoing through our days.

A life where we learn — slowly, imperfectly, repeatedly —
to trust God, to trust one another, and even, by grace, to let go of
our need to defend ourselves.

But notice something else.

The victory in the wilderness is quiet. No crowds. No ovation.
Just faithfulness. And that is how most courage looks in the life of
faith.

We have come down the mountain.

And we are walking into days of bills and appointments, news that
unsettles, bodies that tire,
relationships that stretch us.

The tempter will not usually invite us to wickedness.
He will invite us to independence. Solve it yourself. Protect
yourself. You owe it to yourself.

And Jesus whispers another way:
Trust the Father
You are held.

The first Adam reached for godlikeness and lost paradise.
The second Adam trusted love and opened the kingdom.

And now Lent begins. Not as punishment. But as practice in trust.
Perhaps the prayer this week is very simple.

Where I am tempted to live without you, teach me to trust you.
Where fear makes me grasp, teach me to receive. Where I try to
carry myself alone, remind me I am already carried.

And the angels come. Not always dramatically. But enough.

Enough.

References

"Living in Tents: Abraham's Faith Journey Metaphor" Pastors.ai. 2023.
<https://pastors.ai/bible/verse/living-in-tents-abrahams-faith-journey-metaphor/>
Accessed February 16, 2026
Lori, William E.. "A Lenten Reflection on the Power of Love." Archdiocese of
Baltimore, February 29, 2016.
<https://www.archbalt.org/a-lenten-reflection-on-the-power-of-love/>

Discussion Questions

Remember how Peter wanted to build tents on the mountain to preserve the glorious moment. How might we sometimes try to 'build tents' in our own spiritual lives rather than trust God's leading to the next step?

- The sermon discusses how Peter's desire to build tents was a beautiful but misguided impulse to hold onto a spiritual high point rather than trust the path Jesus was walking.
- What spiritual experiences or seasons have you tried to hold onto instead of being open to where God might be leading you next?

The sermon compares Jesus' response to temptation in the wilderness with Adam's in the Garden. What are the key differences in how they each handled their testing?

- The sermon contrasts how Adam grasped, doubted, and hid, while Jesus received, rested, and stood in the Word when faced with temptation.
- In what areas of your life do you find yourself acting more like Adam (grasping for control) rather than Jesus (trusting in God)?

Temptation is rarely about evil things but about 'good things offered in ways that quietly exclude God.' How does this perspective change our understanding of daily temptations?

- The sermon uses the example of comfortable, successful people who simply have 'no need of God' to illustrate how sufficiency can be a subtle form of temptation.
- What are some 'good things' in your life that might be causing you to rely less on God?

The sermon describes Jesus' victory in the wilderness as 'quiet' with 'no crowds, no ovation, just faithfulness.' Why is this significant for our understanding of spiritual victory?

- The sermon emphasises that most courage in the life of faith looks like quiet faithfulness in ordinary moments rather than dramatic victories.
- When have you experienced a 'quiet victory' in your faith journey that others might not have noticed but was significant in your relationship with God?

Throughout the sermon, trust is presented as essential to both our relationship with God and with others. Why does the speaker suggest that 'without trust, there is no love'?

- The sermon connects the tragedy of Eden not to the fruit itself, but to the beginning of a life where we believe we must carry ourselves alone.
- In what ways might your struggle to trust God be affecting your ability to truly love and trust others in your life?

This five-day devotional will take a deeper dive into the sermon from this weekend. We will explore how descending from moments of clarity and glory leads us to places of trust and faith in ordinary days. Join us as we explore what it means to walk faithfully in the quiet and plainness of the wilderness, just as Jesus did.



Day 1

Scripture for the day: Matthew 4:1-2

The narrative of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness introduces us to the profound idea of trust in the Father through seasons of dust and struggle. While the mountaintop experiences bring clarity, they cannot be sustained. Faith is meant to descend into the common day-to-day life, where real trust is built not through grandeur, but through moments of quiet faithfulness.

As we engage with this story, we are reminded that faith is tested not just in offering trust in bright, glorious moments but in affirming it during bland, arid days. Our journey mirrors that of Jesus, who felt hungry and weary yet chose the path of trust over self-reliance. This devotion invites us to embrace faith as a practice of trust even when divine presence feels distant.

- How does Jesus' action in the wilderness inspire your own walk of faith?
- Are there ways in which you are tempted to hold onto moments instead of embracing trust?
- What ordinary aspects of life can you invite God into more fully?
- Pray to recognise God's presence in your daily routine.
- Seek strength to trust God in mundane and challenging times.

Day 2

Scripture for the day: Romans 5:19

The contrast between Adam's failure and Jesus' obedience in the face of temptation offers a unique lens for viewing trust and divine reliance. Adam represents humanity's tendency to grasp for control and doubt God's goodness, while Jesus signifies a new humanity grounded in obedience and trust.

We live in a culture that encourages self-sufficiency, yet in moments when

fear and survival instincts urge us to take control, we can look to Jesus' example. Faith in God's provision and His enduring presence helps transform anxiety into peace, encouraging us to slowly begin walking in this new way of being human.

- What areas of your life do you feel most inclined to control?
- How can Jesus' obedience reshape your approach to trust?
- Where might God be inviting you to release control and trust Him more?
- Ask God to reveal areas where you rely on your own strength.
- Pray for a heart open to receiving guidance in those areas.

Day 3

Scripture for the day: Genesis 3:1-6

The story of the first Adam is a tale of suspicion entering paradise, where the compulsion to secure one's own life sowed the seeds of mistrust. These ancient narratives echo into our lives, posing the question: can we trust in God's generosity or do we need to grasp control ourselves?

Where Adam and Eve reached, Jesus chose not to, emphasising that true life emerges from reliance on God. This devotion encourages us to reflect on the places in our lives where fear leads us to reach and grasp, rather than to rest and receive. In moments of doubt and uncertainty, turning to Christ can illuminate the path back to trust.

- How do moments of doubt affect your daily relationship with God?
- What does it mean for you to stand in God's promise rather than reaching for control?
- In what ways are you currently experiencing the temptation to mistrust?
- Pray for clarity in moments of doubt.
- Seek trust to let God's promise guide your thoughts and actions.

Day 4

Scripture for the day: Matthew 4:5-7

At the heart of the second temptation is the invitation to test God's love and provision, masked as religious righteousness. The tempter suggests proving God's faithfulness through a grand gesture, yet Jesus' reliance on

the Word underscores that faithfulness often looks quiet, grounded, and radically obedient.

We encounter invitations to test God's love in our lives, often subtly through day-to-day frustrations. Here, the choice lies not in seeking grand proofs but in committing ourselves to the unseen faithfulness of God. This devotional invites reflection on our own freedoms to trust without needing to see.

- Where have you sought to test God's faithfulness in your life?
- How does Scripture guide your understanding of God's unwavering truth?
- What does quiet faithfulness look like in your everyday life?
- Pray for wisdom to avoid testing God and instead embrace quiet trust.
- Reflect on instances where God has been faithful without grand gestures.

Day 5

Scripture for the day: Matthew 4:8-10

The final temptation offers Jesus all the kingdoms if He will compromise His allegiance to serve and worship another. Yet, without hesitation, Jesus stands firm, showing that the Kingdom of God cannot be swayed by earthly power or vision.

This devotional explores the notion of allegiance. In times when the world offers us power, identity, or security apart from God, standing with Jesus strengthens our resolve. It's a reminder that true power lies in divine connection and purpose, leading to a richer, deeper sense of belonging and peace.

- How do you remain focused on God's kingdom amidst worldly distractions?
- In what ways have you been tempted to align your life with values contrary to God's?
- How does standing firm in faith bring peace and purpose?
- Pray for discernment to recognise temptations that offer false promises.
- Seek strength to find your identity in Christ rather than worldly power.

End notes and further reading

End notes and further reading

Harrington, Daniel J Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Matthew

Moloney, Francis J, SBD, Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of John

Johnson, Luke Timothy: Sacra Pagina: The Gospel on Luke

Collins, Raymond F., Sacra Pagina: First Corinthians

Andrew McGowan substack.com/@abmcg

N.T. Wright, Twelve months of Sundays Year A

Andrew Pratt, pastor and hymn writer (twelvebaskets.co.uk)

Let your faith and relationships
be shaped by love and patience
for God's love is
revealed in lives, not letters.



Brabarlung Totem

This is produced on
GunaiKurnai Country and
our respects are made to
the First Nations people
everywhere.

Prepared by Rev'd Dennis Webster, Rector of the Anglican Parish of Paynesville, Diocese of Gippsland for personal or small group use.

Acknowledgement of use appreciated

Subscription to "www.breaking-open-the-word.org" is available.

Also substack: substack.com/@tastigr

Published every weekend, usually on Saturday, AEST.

Biblical Quotes are from The New Revised Standard Version - Anglicised, which is © 1990 the National Churches of Christ, USA.

Study notes are prepared in conjunction and by subscription of www.church.tech, an AI open source for pastors. Content is modified for local use.

Images are either from public domain, theworshipcloud.org, original work or generate tastigr.info

is registered to D. M Webster
and all rights are reserved. © 2026
www.breaking-open-the-word.org
Email: dennis-at-breakingopentheword.org