



SIX STEPPING STONES

Sunday 9th March 2025

THE TEMPTATIONS --- Luke 4.1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.

He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.'

Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "*One does not live by bread alone.*"'

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, 'To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.'

Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "*Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.*"'

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, "*He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you*", and "*On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.*"'

Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "*Do not put the Lord your God to the test.*"'

When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

One | What Stands Out?

Imagine this scene with all five senses.

Two | What Does It Mean?

How do these temptations build up momentum in the story?

Three | How Does It Connect?

How might each temptation be about the kind of Messiah Jesus will become?

Four | What Are the Deeper Questions?

What do you make of the presence of the Spirit and the Devil in this story?

Five | What Challenges You?

What voices speak to you in the privacy of your own heart and mind?

Six | How Will You Respond?

What are you facing decisions about at the moment? How are you deciding?

*God of the wilderness, your Spirit leads us to face the truth,
unprotected and exposed: in our times of trial, help us to resist the worship
of empty power and the illusion of invulnerability that we might find
our true food in Jesus Christ, the Broken Bread. Amen*



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Sunday 16th March 2025

THE MOTHER HEN --- Luke 13:31-35

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, ‘Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.’

He said to them, ‘Go and tell that fox for me, “Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem.”’

‘Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.”’

One | What Stands Out?

What different tones of voice can you hear in this story?

Two | What Does It Mean?

What are the differences between foxes and hens?

Three | How Does It Connect?

Why might the lectionary ask us to read this story during the weeks of Lent?

Four | What Are the Deeper Questions?

What kind of person does this story show Jesus to be?

Five | What Challenges You?

How do you cope with rejection and with opposition?

Six | How Will You Respond?

What can you do this Lent to let Jesus be a mother hen for you?

*Brooding Spirit, beneath your wings there is creation and life:
accompany us on the difficult path with the disappeared,
the broken and the fearful, so that we find the way to the city of our peace
where we are all accepted as your beloved;
through the cross of Jesus Christ, our only Lord. Amen*



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Sunday 23rd March 2025

THREE PRINCIPLES FOR LENT LIVING --- Luke 13:1-9

There were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, ‘Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did.

‘Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.’

Then he told this parable: ‘A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, “See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?” He replied, “Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.”’

One | What Stands Out?

If this passage were a newspaper front page, what would the headlines be?

Two | What Does It Mean? --- INVEST

What does the gardener’s patience teach us about how to place our hope?

Three | How Does It Connect? --- LAMENT

How do Jesus’ words about the tower show us that it is right to grieve?

Four | What Are the Deeper Questions? --- RESIST

Think about the massacre. How does Jesus challenge us to resist injustice?

Five | What Challenges You?

Which of these three principles—resist, lament, or invest—is hardest for you?

Six | How Will You Respond?

What’s one way you can practice Lent living this week?

*Living Mystery, whose way is not ours, whose name cannot be bought or sold:
lead us from justice without compassion and sacrifice without mercy to a love
which nurtures and a grace without price; through Jesus Christ, the true Bread.*



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Sunday 30th March 2025

HOME COMING --- Luke 15:11b-32

‘There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, “Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.” So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.

When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, “How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.’”

So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”

But the father said to his slaves, “Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!” And they began to celebrate.

Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, “Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.” Then he became angry and refused to go in.



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His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, “Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!”

Then the father said to him, “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.”

One | What Stands Out?

If this passage were a painting, what would be at the centre?

Two | What Does It Mean?

If this passage were a family story, which moments would be retold the most?

Three | How Does It Connect?

What does this parable teach us about the nature of home?

Four | What Are the Deeper Questions?

How far is the father in the story a helpful picture of God the Father?

Five | What Challenges You?

Where do you see yourself in this story—returning, waiting, or resenting?

Six | How Will You Respond?

What is one way you can practice radical welcome this week?

*Undignified God, spirit of dangerous feasts, inviting the unclean to your table:
find us in the far country of hopelessness and greed;
free us from the prison of resentment and envy and bring us back to life;
through Jesus Christ, the friend of sinners. Amen*



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Sunday 6th April 2025

COSTLY LOVE --- John 12:1-8

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, the one who was about to betray him, said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?' He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.

Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.'

One | What Stands Out?

If this was a movie, what kind of music would you use in this scene?

Two | What Does It Mean?

How do Mary's actions feel over the top?

Three | How Does It Connect?

Why does Jesus celebrate Mary's actions?

Four | What Are the Deeper Questions?

Why does Judas' reaction feel reasonable, and why does Jesus challenge it?

Five | What Challenges You?

Would Jesus' words challenge you differently if you didn't know the one questioning him was Judas?

Six | How Will You Respond?

Are you brave enough to honour Jesus in a way that others might question?

Extravagant God, lavishing your love on the poverty of our hearts: inspire us to give without restraint, and to lose life that we might find it again, so the world will be filled with the fragrance of your love; through Jesus Christ, who offers himself for us as the Broken Bread of Life. Amen.



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Sunday 13th April 2025

THE ARRIVAL --- Luke 19:28-40

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" just say this: "The Lord needs it."'"

So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?'

They said, 'The Lord needs it.' Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road.

As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!"

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.'

He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.'



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One | What Stands Out?

What details in the passage show that Jesus' arrival is carefully planned?

Two | What Does It Mean?

Why do some people celebrate Jesus while others try to silence him?

Three | How Does It Connect?

Where do you see yourself in this crowd—shouting praise, staying quiet, or questioning?

Four | What Are the Deeper Questions?

Read Luke 19:11–27. How does Jesus' parable about a rejected king shape the way we hear this story?

Five | What Challenges You?

What changes between today's crowd and the silence of the sealed tomb?

Six | How Will You Respond?

After the weeks of Lent preparing, how are you being called to step deeper into Holy Week this year?

*Lord of the swaying palms,
the stones of earth and the beasts of burden
bear witness to your coming:
lead us from the violence of empires
and the collusion of crowds to a heart of flesh,
a world remade, and a new song for all creation,
through Jesus Christ, the Crucified One. Amen.*