

So we've past Ash Wednesday again, And of course SHROVE Tuesday –that day when housewives used up all the eggs in the pantry and then made them into pancakes.

And of course eggs would not be seen on their tables again until Easter.

So we are now in LENT AGAIN.

The wife of an impoverished curate returned home from a shopping spree with an expensive new dress. Her Husband was horrified. "I am so sorry dear," said the wife

"but the devil tempted me." "You should have said to the devil, Get thee behind me Satan"

"but I did, replied the wife, and all he said was that it looked even nicer from the back"

Jesus 's temptations in the Wilderness are the usual theme for the 1st. Sunday in lent.

We should think of this story of the temptations as something going on inside Jesus's head, as he considered how to bring GOD to MEN and MEN to GOD. William Barclay described the temptation story as the most sacred story in the New Testament. WHY ?

For this reason, that there is only one possible origin and source for this story.

That is JESUS Himself! Remember – he was alone in the wilderness. And so this Story must have come from Jesus's own lips. He told his disciples all about it.

Well so much for the background.

Matthew and Luke recorded the temptations in more detail, although they alternated the 2nd. and 3rd. temptations.

When Jesus rose from the waters of baptism he knew that He was the Messiah.

THE SON OF GOD. How was he to carry out the work of the Messiah?

What did it mean for Himself that He was God's own Son?

Jesus explored and rejected one course of action after another. Many tempting possibilities presented themselves . Only to be pushed away.

I would like this morning to consider in little more detail the first of those temptations of Jesus. Jesus was in the desert and was Hungry. And the Devil said – Look at all these lovely rounded stones -- just like loaves of bread. – Go on pick one up and turn it into real bread. You have the power to do that,- if you are the Son of God (perhaps you are mistaken) Perhaps you are kidding yourself. Are you quite sure? Perhaps it is a big delusion. Two Temptations at once!

The Temptation to prove he was the Son of God, By using His power to turn Stones into bread, and then to eat the bread himself to relieve his hunger! In fact you could turn sand into money - trees into houses – grass into cauliflowers, wonderful ideas! The Jews were poor –So give them all the material things they need so they can say - they've never had it so good. (Words reminiscent of a former prime minister.)

But this would have been like bribery: - bribing people to follow him for the sake of what they could get out of it. It would be like the politicians promising people all the things they wanted in order to get their votes in an election. But Jesus did not believe in bribery. People who followed him would not receive extra favours for doing so. That is why people who follow Christ are not immune from accidents, disabilities, or ill health.

We know that Jesus often did heal the sick, but this was because he had compassion on them. He did not do it to bribe them to follow him. He even healed one of the soldiers who was arresting him in the garden of Gethsemane. And so Jesus answered the Devil with the words:- "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.. So one of the themes of Lent is Temptation , and how to master it. There is an amusing tale – a parable , one call it – of a man asleep in a tent when a strange face looked in at the flap and said, " Good evening Sir" "Good evening said the man" "I see who you are: you are a camel. " "yes " the camel said "I am" and a very cold camel. Please just let me put my nose in. But next, it wanted to put its neck in, and then one leg, and then the other, and then its hump. " This is too much" said the man. But the Camel only came further in, till even its hind legs and tail were in too. At last, as there was no room for both of them in the tent, the man had to get out. The moral is plain; don't let temptations put even their noses inside. Turn them out at once.

When Jesus healed The Sick - It Was Because He had Compassion on them – He did not do it to bribe them into following Him. .

So there is to be NO FAVOURATISM or special awards for following Him.

ONLY A CROSS.! He calls us to a life of GIVING not of GETTING.

Amen.