

***The Way x12. Sunday 24 March 2019.***

**Jesus makes a Way in the wilderness.**

***READ: Luke 4: 1- 13 and Mark 8: 31 – 38.***

**This year** through our Sunday study and reflection on Scripture we aim to see a clear thread of teaching and revelation about God showing **a way forward and a way through** that we can **follow** – whether we are journeying in an easy friendly place or the hostile, lonely wilderness. JESUS declared himself to be the Way (to the Father *John 14: 6*). *Acts 9: 2* His followers are described as those who ***belonged to the Way.***

**We seek the Way of Jesus – to see how he lived his life and won his battles.**  
LENT journey towards the suffering of Easter has begun and we have begun in our talks to follow Jesus on the Way of obedience. I have already said that according to the teaching of *Philippians 2* we need to have the same attitude as Jesus – **v8 “he was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death – his death on the cross”.** (see also *Hebrews 5: 7 -9*)

**Last week I encouraged us that the relationship to focus on in the wilderness temptations is that of the Trinity.** *Luke 4: 1* tells us that Jesus returned from the Jordon – where of course he had been baptised by John.

**Jesus – Father’s voice – Spirit (Jordon Baptism – dance of Trinity – description of how we experience Godhead – 3 in one.** *Tertullian* early third century CE)

Jesus “full of the Holy Spirit” is lead by the Spirit into the desert (wilderness or lonely place – no other human was there). The only other beings that were there were the wild animals (*Mark’s Gospel*) and then the angels. **The purpose?** The Spirit took Jesus into the wilderness – **to be tempted by the devil.** (FOCUS on Trinity – the devil is peripheral to this essential relationship **but the Greek word diabolos means DIVIDER and that is what evil seeks to do in this case the essential Oneness of Godhead).**

**Jesus was not alone in the wilderness because of that Trinitarian relationship of Godhead** – the Oneness of the Father, son and Spirit relationship was challenged but not broken or divided. Jesus surely missed human companionship, but he was not alone.

Jesus was physically weak but inwardly strong after this time of trial. At the end of 40 days and nights fasting from food we are **not told that Jesus was lonely – no we are told that Jesus was hungry! His relationship – his Oneness with the Father and the Spirit is intact.**

**What does the “divider” look like?** All that is given in description of this “being” – is what the devil SAID – his words. We are not told that the devil/divider had any substance or form.

In Genesis Satan is pictured as a serpent and in Isaiah (*14: 12*) as an angel of light (Lucifer – Latin name for the planet Venus (NB C.S. Lewis classic portrayal of evil in “Voyage to Venus”, in classic mythology – the light bringer. Jesus refers to this

perhaps in *Luke 10: 18* – some sort of fallen cosmic being – star or angel). **BUT here the temptation comes as words/ thoughts –**

It's therefore logical to me to assume that the "appearance of Satan/ the devil or divider" has no relevance. – It is what the words/ the voice/ the thoughts suggests/ asks/ and demands that is the temptation. (So too when we are tempted – there is no appearance of substance just the temptation to our mind, our body – our soul). All images or pictures of the devil are less than helpful.

The temptation/ Tempter (seeks to separate and divide Jesus from his Oneness of relationship and purpose with the Father and Spirit. The devil seeks to short circuit Jesus' following through on the will/ the purpose of the Godhead – the Trinity. **The tempter seeks to divide the Absolute Oneness.**

***If you are God's Son (if you are in relationship with the Father) order these stones to become bread.***

**Jesus made a Way in the wilderness by staying in relationship, in Oneness with God the Father and God the Spirit. He refused to doubt his relationship with the Godhead and the WORD that the Father had spoken at his baptism – "You are my own dear son, I am pleased with you".**

**We will discover the Way through the "wilderness" by hearing and believing what God has spoken to us. That's where it starts.**

**This week we consider vv 5 – 8 ; here the Divider comes to Jesus as what he describes in John's Gospel as the "Prince of this World" – John 12: 31; and seeks to tempt Jesus to choose to worship "wealth and power".**

**In this world** people who have wealth and power are considered **to be successful** and are often envied.

*The Devil takes/ leads Jesus up to see in a brief moment all the Kingdoms of the inhabited earth (BASILEIAS TES OIKOUMENES). In world terms Jesus is neither a human who is wealthy or powerful wealthy or powerful – he has no **authority or the glory that goes with it.** (EXOUSIA- AUTHORITY AND DOXAN-GLORY - The Devil appears to think that these are all his and he offers them to Jesus if he will only worship/ serve him. (Usurper – *Psalm 2* – they belong to Jesus)*

Jesus again refuses to be separated from the relationship he has within the Trinity and declares that the Scriptures (what is written) say that **God alone is to be worshipped and served. (Deuteronomy 6: 13** To worship another is disobedience.)

Those who choose wealth and power (authority and the glory that goes with it) over worship of God are by virtue of their choice **worshipping the Prince of this World.** (No one can serve 2 masters: either he will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to one and despise the other. *Matthew 6: 24.*)

Last week we spoke of "greed" *1 Corinthians 6: 10* - we will not possess the Kingdom if greed is in us. Our lust for "power and the glory that goes with it" will stop God having his Way in our lives. These things can divert us from following in the Way of God.

**Wealth and power**, it could be argued can accomplish much that is good but we must never serve them or let them dictate to us. Even those who have faith in Jesus can be

led astray by the love of money and led into evil 1 Timothy 6: 10. Indeed as one of our readings Mark 8: 36 said: *it profits us nothing if we gained the whole world but lost our soul*. To gain all the world has to offer in terms of what wealth and power can give us is nothing at all if we lose our humanity (made in God's image) and our relationship of life with God both now and in eternity.

**Many would not see Jesus' life as successful.** In worldly terms of success, he had little authority or what the world considers wealth and gives glory to. (*For our sake he did not cling onto glory but became poor*). But Jesus succeeded in everything he came to do: see Luke 4; 18, 19 (*Reading from the prophet Isaiah*) – his manifesto just later in the same chapter. He walked in obedience the Way set for him.

**The inhabited earth and Kingdoms of power that Jesus saw before him is the world of ROME.** (Luke 2:1 and 3:1). **Was Jesus tempted to set up an earthly Kingdom more powerful than that of Rome? (Leon Morris).** Could this be a legitimate aim? Could this be how "Jesus could win back control of this world? This is what some of his future followers would want him to do – *to restore the kingdom to Israel*).

All Jesus would need to do this is to compromise and accept the World's/ the Prince of this World's authority and methods. All Jesus would have to do is to turn his back on his mission to throw down the Ruler of this World John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)

BUT his Kingdom is different (John 18: 36 fol) from any earthly way of ruling. His Way is the way of humility and service of humanity all the way to the cross and the crown of thorns. Jesus renounced the worship of wickedness and greed for power. The Godhead – Father, Spirit, Son is NOT divided.

These temptations were real to Jesus and they are real to us when they come. The Church has not always said NO to worldly power and wealth – it has at times become corrupted and served the purposes of the Prince of this World rather than those of God.

**What power does the Devil (divider) have in the world now?**

Perhaps only that which people give him. Evil is power crazy and seeks sycophants. The Devil seeks the worship and glory that only God is worthy of. If we desire authority and glory/ wealth and power more than we desire relationship with God then it gives the Devil/ Evil One a foothold and that's all it takes for him to climb into our lives. He will target our bodies and our minds with his thoughts.

*Martin Luther, You can't stop the birds flying over your head but you can stop them from building a nest in your hair. Don't let his lies get into your mind!*

**Wealth and power can be very addictive** and with them the **adulation and jealousy of others follow on and they too are addictive.** This is how evil – the Prince of this World takes control of individuals, and households and of whole nations.

***YOURS LORD is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever. AMEN.***