All Saints Alive

Temptation

A Sermon preached by Janet Bird at Sele Farm on 18th February 2018

Temptation is a word which most of us can relate to at some time or other and we may not always be able to resist it. The writer Oscar Wilde wrote "I can resist anything except temptation" and perhaps as Lent progresses and if we have decided to give up various pleasures (Chocolate, biscuits, alcohol perhaps) we may be beginning to find that we agree with him as we have just the odd chocolate or glass of wine. We may think of these as small temptations because they don't really hurt anybody else, but are we fooling ourselves?

Sometimes we may be tempted to do things that may ultimately cause harm to our self or to someone else.

We may be tempted to take a risk such as breaking the speed limit when we are in a hurry or crossing the road when there is a car coming.

We may be tempted to avoid paying tax or to lie about something we have done or something we have failed to do.

The risks of giving in to temptation may sometimes seem to be worth taking – until something goes badly wrong and somebody gets hurt or you are brought to account.

Temptation may occur suddenly or it may gnaw away at us over a period of time. The best way of dealing with temptation is to be prepared for it to strike at any time.

At the beginning of His ministry Jesus was sent out into the wilderness the Holy Spirit to be tempted by Satan for 40 days. In Mark's gospel, we are simply told that "He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him."

In Matthew's Gospel, we are given more details of how Satan tested Him by trying to encourage Him to prove that he was the Son of God. First by turning stones into bread so that he could eat when he was starving, then by jumping from the top of the Temple and trusting that the angels would save him and finally by taking complete power over the whole world in exchange for falling on his knees and worshipping Satan.

However Jesus was able to resist whatever temptations Satan came up with because he was fully prepared. Just before He went into the wilderness Jesus had been baptised by John the Baptist and the Spirit of God had come down upon Him like a dove as God's words came from Heaven saying "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

So when Jesus went into the wilderness He knew that God loved Him and would protect Him and give Him the strength to not give in to temptation. Being tempted isn't the sin. Putting ourselves in the way of temptation may not be very wise but it is by giving into temptation that we commit the sin.

Children will often do things which are inherently dangerous or unkind not because they have been tempted but because they have not yet had enough experience to know how to behave. Knowing that they are loved and being taught well enables them to make their mistakes in a safe environment and to learn the difference between right and wrong, so that they are, in time, able to deal with temptation wisely.

Just as we prepare those we love and God prepared Jesus so God prepares each of us. Because God loves us he encourages us not to put ourselves in the way of temptation, but if it strikes He can give us the strength to resist it.

Similarly as children of a loving God we need to follow the example of God's own Son and show love and kindness to others rather than putting temptation into their way so that we are not encouraging them to sin.

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How can we avoid putting ourselves in the way of temptation? When we pray we must be sure that we really think about the words we are using so that we really mean them. Jesus taught us to pray "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil" and when we put our trust in God just as Jesus did and accept and rejoice in the fact that He really does love us, warts and all, we can get the strength we need to resist temptation.

However we also know that isn't the end of the story.

Our loving Heavenly Father knows that we are merely human and so he sent Jesus to redeem us from our sins by dying for us on the Cross.

As we journey towards Easter may we use our time wisely, examining our consciences and strengthening our resolve to follow Jesus; suffering with Him on the Cross on Good Friday so that we are truly ready to rejoice on Easter Day as we celebrate his Resurrection to eternal life when we renew our own baptismal vows and proclaim that Jesus Christ is Risen indeed!

All Saints Church • Hertford



With posy making activity and opportunity to light Memorial Candles.



All Saints Church – Queens Road, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG13 8AE www.allsaintshertford.org



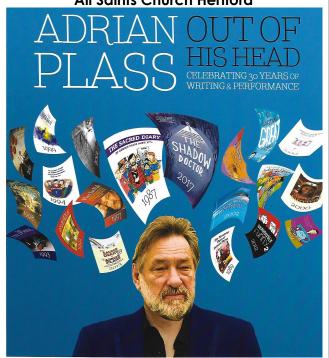
SATURDAY 17 MARCH 2018 7.00pm

St John's Hall, Churchfields, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG13 8AE

Please sign up at the back of the Church or contact the Churchwarden on 01992 589781

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