

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT (YEAR A) Sunday 22 February 2026

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MAGICIAN'S HAT

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

Temptations in the wilderness (Matthew 4: 1-11)

All three synoptic gospels portray Jesus' ministry as beginning with a period of forty days in the wilderness tempted by the devil. Both Matthew and Luke describe three of the temptations that Jesus experienced. Each of these three temptations challenges Jesus to adopt a model of Messiahship which would win power and wide public appeal, and not lead to the inevitable cross on Good Friday. Matthew and Luke agree in placing first the temptation to turn stone into bread. A Messiah who could turn stone into bread would be guaranteed a following. Jesus firmly rejects this approach.

The image to stimulate reflection on Matthew's account of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness is *magician's hat*.

Core extract from the Gospel (Matthew 4: 1-4; for reflection throughout the week)

Jesus was led up by the Spirit
into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
He fasted forty days and forty nights,
and afterwards he was famished.
The tempter came and said to him,
'If you are the Son of God,
command these stones to become loaves of bread.'
But he answered, 'It is written,
"One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."'

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Lord Jesus Christ,
you taught your followers
that we do not live by bread alone.
Help us to make the right choices
and to value the right things in life,
that our lives may be pleasing to you;
now and always.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

Matthew 4: 1-11

The Temptation of Jesus

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written,

"One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

"He will command his angels concerning you",
and "On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." '

Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." '

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

"Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him." '

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (Matthew 4: 1-11)

Begin to explore Matthew's account of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What is the significance of commanding stones to become loaves of bread?
- What is the significance of jumping from the pinnacle of the temple?
- What is the significance of falling down and worshipping the devil?
- How does Jesus respond to each of these temptations?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

Explore how Mark and Luke deal with Jesus' temptations in the wilderness.

- Mark 1: 12-13
- Luke 4: 1-13

Explore how the devil draws on the Bible.

- Psalm 91: 11-12

Explore how Jesus draws on Deuteronomy, the Book of the Law.

- Deuteronomy 8: 3
- Deuteronomy 6: 16
- Deuteronomy 6: 13

Explore how the theme of Jesus' temptations is developed in Hebrews.

- Hebrews 2: 17-18
- Hebrews 4: 14-16

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Exploring online

Widen your exploration of Matthew's account of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Temptation of Christ
- Jesus tempted art
- Magician's hat

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on Matthew's account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness is *magician's hat*. Draw on your experience of the magician's hat. For example:

- When have you seen magicians and magician's hats on stage?
- When have you seen magicians and magician's hats on film?
- What is so special about the magician's hat?

What have you learned about the magician's hat?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by Matthew's account of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness or by the image of the magician's hat.

- Make a collage of pictures of Jesus' temptations.
- Make a display of magician's hats.
- Create a mural telling the sequence of Jesus' temptations.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness or the image of the magician's hat.



EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales.



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