

## Lenten Devotional Reflection

1<sup>st</sup> March, 2020 (Lent 1)

**Scripture: Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Matthew 4:1-11 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

<sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?’” <sup>2</sup> The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; <sup>3</sup> but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’” <sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; <sup>5</sup> for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” <sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. <sup>3</sup> The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” <sup>4</sup> But he answered, “It is written,

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

<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup> 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.’”

<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; <sup>9</sup> and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

‘Worship the Lord your God,  
and serve only him.’”

<sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

### **Message**

Temptation in the time of epidemic

The novel coronavirus is spreading across the world in a rapid pace. In this time of uncertainty and anxiety, can we experience the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding? Can God’s abundant grace lead us out of this time of adversity?

We are facing tribulation in this epidemic. Tribulation is paradoxical. It can become a blessing and condemnation at the same time. Today’s Scripture is about temptation, which is also paradoxical. In the Book of Genesis, Adam failed in the temptation which leads to sins and death. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus’ complete victory in the temptation brings faith for us to face Satan’s temptation.

Adam and Eve tried to pursue unlimited material desire with their limited life. At this time, Satan tempted them to sin against the boundaries set by God. The Ash Wednesday Service reminds us “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel”.

Jesus showed the image of God’s love in the three temptations. To fulfill God’s plan of salvation, Jesus “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form” (Philippians 2:6). The epidemic is also a kind of temptation for us and lets us rethink the meaning and priority of life. Hong Kong people rushed for supermarkets and grocery stores to buy necessities. Can we try to share what we got to others in need? Let us follow Jesus to overcome temptations from Satan and care for people in need with faith and peace.

### **Reflection**

1. Hong Kong has been prosperous and stable at most of the time in the past years. How do you feel when facing the outbreak of the novel coronavirus?
2. What is the implication of Adam and Jesus’ temptation to you?
3. During the fight against the epidemic, how do you make choices when facing paradoxical situations?

The Rt Revd Dr Timothy KWOK