

02.22 Christ Church Vienna - Lent 1

Romans 5:12–19; Matthew 4:1–11

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight oh Lord our strength and our Redeemer! Amen.

Dear Friends,

As I promised last week, after the glory of transfiguration on this First Sunday of Lent, the Church leads us into the wilderness.

St Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, takes us back to Adam. Back to the beginning. He speaks about how sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin. And we know this story well — not just from Genesis, but from our own lives.

Adam is tempted with something he does not have. Something he wants. Something he believes will complete him. “You will be like God.” It is the temptation to grasp. To take. To possess.

And that dynamic feels painfully familiar.

How often does temptation come to us in exactly that form?
If only I had this. If only I could secure that. If only I were more recognised, more comfortable, more in control.

Temptation usually begins with the quiet suggestion: you are missing something.

Now look at Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. He has been baptised. The Father has declared: “This is my beloved Son.” And immediately the Spirit leads Him into the wilderness.

Notice the contrast.

Adam is in a garden of Eden, the place of abundance.
Jesus is in a desert of deprivation.

Adam falls surrounded by plenty.
Jesus stands firm in hunger.

And here is something striking. The devil tempts Adam with something he does not yet possess. But he tempts Jesus with things that are already His.

“Turn these stones into bread.”
But all creation is already His.

“Throw yourself down.”
But He already lives in perfect trust with the Father.

“All the kingdoms of the world will be yours.”
But they already belong to Him.

Adam reaches for what is not his.
Jesus refuses to grasp even what is His by right.

That is the difference.

Adam’s temptation is about acquiring.
Jesus’ temptation is about misusing possession.

And this is deeply relevant for us.

Sometimes we think temptation is only about wanting what we do not have. But often, especially as Christians, temptation is about how we use what we do have — our gifts, our authority, our freedom, our intelligence, even our faith.

Jesus refuses to use His power independently of the Father. He refuses to turn stones into bread simply to end His hunger, to manipulate God for protection, the glory without obedience.

He chooses trust.

And that choice is not easy.

We should not imagine that Christ’s temptation was somehow theatrical or symbolic only. The Church confesses that He is truly God and truly human. His divine nature does not cancel His humanity. His hunger was real even the weakness and the loneliness was real.

Precisely because He is without sin, He feels the full weight of temptation — without escaping it by giving in.

And that should comfort us.

Because Lent is not abstract. It touches very real struggles.

When we begin to fast — whether from food, from alcohol, from social media, from whatever it may be — something very simple happens: we discover how attached we are.

Hunger comes. Irritation comes. Restlessness comes.

And sometimes we are surprised at how quickly our inner peace depends on small comforts.

Lent gently exposes that.

But it does not expose it to shame us. It exposes it for healing.

Fasting is not about proving spiritual strength. It is about learning dependence. It is about remembering that “man shall not live by bread alone.”

In the first temptation, the issue is bread — physical need.

In the second, it is life and death — safety.

In the third, it is the whole world — power.

Bread. Security. Control.

If we are honest, most of our anxieties revolve around those three.

Will I have enough?

Will I be safe?

Will my life matter?

In Adam, humanity tried to secure these things by grasping.

In Christ, humanity learns to entrust them to the Father.

This is why Paul can speak about Christ as the new Adam. Through one man’s disobedience came death. Through one man’s obedience comes life.

Lent invites us to step into that obedience not perfectly, but sincerely.

Perhaps your fasting this year feels small. That is fine. It should be human-sized. What matters is not how impressive it is, but whether it helps you trust.

And let me tell you something: we may fail. We may break our fast. We may lose patience.

Do not be surprised.

Romans 5 is not a celebration of human discipline. It is a celebration of grace. “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”

Your salvation does not depend on a successful Lent. It depends on Christ’s obedience in the wilderness, and ultimately on the Cross.

So this season is not about anxiety. It is about alignment. Not about spiritual performance, but about quiet re-orientation.

Adam’s story tells us what happens when we try to take life into our own hands.

Jesus’ story shows us what true sonship looks like: trust, even in hunger, even without visible security and, even when the kingdoms of the world glitter before us.

As we enter these forty days, we walk into the wilderness — but we do not walk alone.

And slowly, gently, through prayer, fasting, and repentance, we begin to learn what Adam forgot and what Christ restored:

That we are most alive not when we seize, but when we trust.

Amen.