

*First Sunday in Lent – He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan;
and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. (Mark1:13)*

Lent is a season that is inspired and informed by the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness at the outset of his earthly ministry. Seeking to determine his purpose and vocation, he was tempted to pursue pathways that did not belong to the way of God's Kingdom.

Yet in those temptations there is more than an echo of the kind of religion that we can all too easily find ourselves pursuing. Lent is a time for us also to free ourselves of such inclinations, and be reminded again of their emphatic rejection.

(If used in public worship, this reading might work best if two voices read alternate stanzas)

Turn these stones into bread
Grant us a faith where self is satisfied
And tables are spread at which believers can dine
With backs turned on a needy, hungry world

But bread alone will not sustain
And the food of your word calls us to place others before ourselves;
To seek your Kingdom and speak your truth,
Casting its light upon pathways of hope.

Leap from the temple's highest tower
Grant us a faith that thrills and entertains
Where we can applaud and cheer for more
To take our minds off the crosses that others may bear.

But you refuse the temptation of being shaped by our desires
To willingly dance to tunes of our making.
You call us to capture this world's attention
With refrains of justice and acts of compassion.

Sign up to the agendas of the powers that be
Grant us a faith that leaves their gods and idols unchallenged and undisturbed;
That asks no questions of systems and structures
That leave many behind, oppressed and forgotten

But you are the one we are called to enthrone
Whose kingdom is founded on justice and right
That nations might rejoice in the light of its coming
And hope can echo when its cause is embraced.