

## **TUESDAY COMMUNION**

"Resisting temptation the Jesus way"

Hymn:

Reading: Luke 4.1-13

Prayers:

I think it was Oscar Wilde who said, "I can resist everything except temptation."

And I know what he means. Before our harvest supper at Buxton last night I was at the harvest supper at Harpur Hill.

I resolutely declined the meat pie that was offered me. Then, someone placed a slice of chocolate gateau just on the far side of my spoon.

It stared at me.

It invited me just to taste it.

I fell!

Temptations take many forms and often we tend to trivialise them, as I have just done.

We make the biggest temptations humankind face into the decision as to whether or not have an extra cream bun. The temptations Jesus face are of a different order. They are about our fundamental attitude to the whole of our existence.

Jesus' words remind us of his understanding of what it meant to live as a faithful person in this world.

"One does not live by bread alone."

Of course, food is important. Food represents perhaps the most important of all our material needs. Without food and drink we die.

Much of talk and effort is directed towards providing us not only with the material things we need but also the material things we desire. We are famously described as being a "consumer society".

Jesus was always practical in his assessment of human need.

He was passionate about justice for the poor and the poor being treated fairly.

Yet here he begins a quotation from Deuteronomy which states. "One does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord."

For Jesus the key question in life was not, "What do I want for myself?" but, "What does God want of us?"

His second answer was, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."

We "worship" who or what has first place in our lives.

The frightening thing about Germany in the 1930's was that many of its people came to "worship" Hitler.

Even many Christians succumbed to giving him the first place in their lives, with disastrous consequences for them as individuals and for the nation and the world as a whole.

I sometimes wonder whether in the years to come as we look back on the way we have threatened the very existence of this planet as a fruitful place people will sense that we worshipped and served our own needs rather than our Creator God.

Finally Jesus says, again quoting Scripture:

"Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

Sometimes I hear people saying that they will worship God if only he proves himself to be a God who is worthy of being trusted.

For Jesus that was wrong way round. He trusted God and found him to be trustworthy. My guess is that many of us have found the same thing.

Faith does not make life easy.

Often it challenges us in demanding ways.

- Faith raises demanding questions and makes us think hard.
- It puts us in places where we'd rather not be.
- It gives us work to do and sacrifices to make
- It can sometimes make us feel isolated.
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When Luke writes that the devil departed from Jesus until an opportune time, that "opportune time" was Gethsemane!

Listening to God,

- worship and service,
- faith and trust, are not the recipe for an easy life!

What they are is the gateway both to authentic life in this world and to that eternal life which begins now but which death can't destroy.

Amen