

AM Matthew 4:1-11

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Date: 23 August 2020

[0 : 00] I'm looking for the notices in my email and I had found them when I was downstairs. Right now I can't find them. So what I think we'll do is I'll introduce myself and then we'll start with the first singing.

And while that singing is happening, I'll have another look and see if I can find them. I did find them when I was downstairs, so they are there, so I should be able to find them.

So my name is David Parker and I finished my free church training in 1995. And then I went to be the minister in the Highlands in a place called Loch Inver, North West Sutherland, beyond Inverness and Ullapool.

So I was up there for about seven years. Then I came down to Ayrshire and was the free church minister in Kilwinning. In 2008, I took a step aside from the parish ministry and went into chaplaincy. And for five years, I worked for 20 hours a week in a children's hospice called Robin House. CHAZ is the organisation, Children's Hospice Association Scotland.

[1 : 14] So I was there for five years in the kids' hospice. And I also worked in an adult hospice in Greenock for three years, doing 15 hours a week. And I also worked in the York Hill Children's Hospital, concentrating on the Shehalian ward, which is the cancer ward, and the paediatric intensive care unit.

And then for five years, full-time from 2013 to 2018, I worked in Airdrie Health Centre as a counsellor, working with the GPs and the community mental health team, seeing maybe 600 patients a year who presented with relationship problems, bereavement problems and mental health problems.

I'm kind of retired. I'm officially still on the register of ministers available for call, but I have a very tiny tenure according to the legislation.

So if that legislation remains the same as it is at the moment, then you wouldn't get me, even if you wanted me, and if I thought that was the Lord's will for very long.

So there we are. We're going to begin our service by singing in Psalm 46. Well, we're not singing, but by listening to the Psalm 46, verses 1 to 6, to the tune, Stroudwater.

[2 : 47] So there was a great Dave in Psalm 46, verse 2, the ■■■s and the physical health care unit.

Thank you. ¶¶ The waters of my Lord We will not fear From the mountains free As we're saying Godless shore A river, water,

The city of our God The holy place In which the Lord Messiah is our Lord God is within In this holy place The city will argue For God will come And bring all day To be your help and shield

The nations are in this array The kingdoms disappear God's peace and land His mighty voice The whole earth melts with fear Now that I've found these notices I'll just deal with them Before they vanish from my screen again If that's okay The evening service at 6pm And on Wednesday at 7pm The AGM meeting

Here in this room Not in the lower hall And it will be chaired by Reverend Kenny MacLeod Your interim moderator The annual accounts for 2019 And the estimates for 2020 Are available on the rear table Each set being inserted Into a poly pocket To minimise any chance of infection They've been approved By the deacons court But the independent examination Is still ongoing So please pick up a set And it will be helpful If you have them with you For reference on Wednesday Everyone is warmly encouraged To come Next Sunday Reverend Kenny MacLeod Will take the service At 11am And Robert Dale Will take the evening service At 6pm And these are all of the Intimations Now I don't know everybody here But I want to extend

[7 : 14] A warm welcome To you And it's good to be here It's good to Even though it's a different Experience It's good to be back here Meeting like this Physically This is the first service I've done Since February When I was doing services In the Isle of Lewis And before that I was doing services For five weeks In Sky But I've been doing services In Zoom But this is the first Physical service That

I've done Since February So it's a new A kind of new experience For me As I'm sure it is For you Just one last thing I have preached here before But it's a very long time ago So there may well be People here That recognise My face Let's unite our hearts Together in prayer Heavenly Father

We thank you That we can come To you Because of Jesus Christ Our great mediator Our redeemer Our saviour Our lord Our king But it's not accurate To say Only because of Jesus Christ It's because of Father Son And spirit One God But Jesus Your son Has become Our mediator And our redeemer Because of his faithfulness To that eternal will Which you purposed In not sparing The son of your love And giving him over To the cross For such as ourselves We human beings Who In ourselves Would want to Eke out our lives Without God Without reference to God And so Lord We thank you For the hope And the good news Of the gospel And Lord We want to pray For our world Now Lord We do recognise That there is much good In our world And much good That is done In our world Which never Makes the six o'clock news Which is never Trumpeted But is done As it were Silently And quietly And we do Thank you Lord For all that good That happens Across our world But Lord We are also aware

That our world Is full of pain And despair And hopelessness And we are also aware Lord That relatively speaking We in the west In countries like Scotland And England In western Europe Do not really know A great deal Of the hardship That so many people Across this world Know And you care Lord For every single Person You give your reign To the righteous And the unrighteous And the You let the sun shine On the righteous And the unrighteous And Lord We pray For this world In all its Difficulties And trials That your mercy

Might be Upon all of us And that you will Put down Wickedness And wicked Rulers And transform The situation Of millions Of people That are made In your image And that you have No desire To see Perishing We pray Oh God For ourselves For the congregation Here And this is A remarkable thing That although You are a God That is beyond Our comprehension A God That has always Been there Nonetheless You are a God Who cares For each one Of us You know Our down Sitting And uprising You know Our personality Our temperament Our nature Our circumstances You know Absolutely Everything About us

[12:18] And here Is the thing Lord That you Care for us And Lord We confess Not only Our sins But often Our Seeming Inability To Cast that Care Upon you And therefore We pray Lord Whatever Might be Troubling us Whatever Might be A burden For us And you Know what That might Be Whether it's A physical Thing A mental Thing A spiritual Thing An event Or news That we've Had Or whatever It might Be That you Would help Us to Remember Lord That you're A very Present help In time Of trouble And so Heavenly Father We We pray That you Will be With us In the Remainder Of this Service And that

You will Speak to Us By your Holy Spirit Hear our Prayers Lord Forgive All our Sins And go Before us At this Time We ask In Jesus Name And for His Sake Amen I'd like Us to Read Now From Genesis Chapter 3 Genesis Chapter 3 And we're Going to Read the First Eight Verses Of this Chapter As Most Of you Probably Will know That here We have An account Of what We Christians Call The fall The fall

Of the Human race Embodied In the Figure Of Adam Now Says The writer In Genesis Chapter 3 The serpent Was more Crafty Than Any Other Beast Of the Field That The Lord God Had Made He Said To The Woman Did God Actually Say You Shall Not Eat Of Any Tree In The Garden And The Woman Said To The Serpent We May Eat Of The Fruit Of The Trees In The Garden But God Said You Shall Not Eat Of The Fruit Of The Tree That Is In The Midst Of The Garden Neither Shall You Touch It Lest You Die But The Serpent Said To The Woman You Will Not Surely Die For God Knows That When You Eat Of It Your Eyes Will Be Opened And You Will Be Like God Knowing Good And Evil So When The Woman Saw That The Tree Was Good For Food And That 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 Then The Eyes Of Both Were Opened And They Knew That They Were Naked Themselves Loin Cloths And They Heard The Sound Of The Lord God Walking In The Garden In The Cool Of The Day And The Man And His Wife Hid Themselves From The Presence Of The Lord God Among The Trees Of The Garden And Then

If We Can Read In The New Testament From Matthew's Gospel Gospel 8 Chapter 4 Where We Have An Account Of Jesus Being Tested In The Wilderness Let's Read This Account In Chapter 4 But Perhaps We Will Read From Some Of The Previous Verses Of Chapter 3 From Verse 13

Because I'll Be Making Reference To Some Of Those Verses Anyway So Although Our Reading Is Chapter 4 1 To 11 We're Going To Read From Chapter 3 Verse 13 Then Jesus Came From Galilee To The Jordan To John To Be Baptized By Him John

[17 : 19] Would Have Prevented Him Saying I Need To Be Baptized By You And Do You Come To Me But Jesus Answered Him Let It Be So Now For Thus It Is Fitting For Us To Fulfill All Righteousness Then Then Then He Consented And When Jesus Was Baptized Immediately He Went Up From The Water And Behold The Heavens Were Opened To Him And They Saw The Spirit Of God Descending Like A Dove And Coming To Rest On Him And Behold A Voice From Heaven Said This Is My Beloved Son With Whom I Am Well Pleased Then Jesus Was Led Up By The Spirit Into The Wilderness To Be Tempted Or Tested By The Devil And After Fasting Forty Days And Forty Nights He Was Hungry Or Famished And 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 Man Shall 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 Set Him On The Pinnacle Of The Temple And Said 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 Lest You Strike Your Foot Against A Stone Jesus Said To Him Again It Is Written You Shall 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 Glory And He Said To Him All These I Will Give You If You Will Fall Down And Worship Me Then Jesus Said To Him Be Gone Satan For It Is Written You Shall Worship The Lord Your God And Him Only Shall You Serve Then The Devil Left Him And Behold Angels Came And Were Ministering To Him Amen And May The Lord Bless The Reading Then Of His Word And Before We Turn To That Word We're Going To Sing Again In Psalm 42 I Keep Saying Sing Again Listen Again To The Psalm Being Sung Psalm 42 Verse 15 To The Tune Thin Art After learning aconce in

■■■■■■ about the ■■■■■uvere when

The living God, when can I be with God anew?

As I pour out thy soul in me, these things I do remember still.

[21 : 05] Thou with the multitude I went, up to your skies from Zion hill.

In their procession I would lead, as he approached with dear old song.

And shards of joy and thankfulness, rejoicing with the festive song.

Why are you, God, that stole my soul? Why are you so disturbed in me?

Trust all, for I will praise him yet. My Saviour and my God is he.

[22 : 37] Let's turn again then to this passage in Matthew's Gospel.

Chapter 4. And what we're going to be doing this morning is looking at this scene, this account of the temptation or the testing of Jesus in this chapter of Matthew's Gospel.

And perhaps you are aware that the word behind the English word that is translated temptation is much broader in the original language.

And it predominantly means testing rather than tempting. Not that the idea of temptation is not there.

It's not that it's absent. It is there, but in the foreground is the idea of testing. And we should really read it that way as we go into this account of the testing of Jesus by the devil in the wilderness.

[24 : 00] Then was Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. I wonder if you've had a wilderness experience.

I mean a time when you felt profoundly alone. Going through some kind of testing of your faith. Perhaps even tempted to throw in the towel. To throw off the cross. And walk away from worshipping God.

Or maybe you've felt at times the tremendous pull of the glamour and the splendour of the world. Or you've thought, this Christianity, far from making things better for me, has diminished me. And indeed, hemmed me in.

[25 : 03] Well, it was into this very arena that Jesus was thrust by the Spirit. Again, the word is interesting here.

It says led there, but it's conducted and conveyed by the Spirit. It's almost as if Jesus had no great choice in the matter.

Although, it's not that he did not choose to do everything that he did. But the way that the language is here, it certainly seems to stress that he was led and conveyed into the wilderness.

This was part of his calling. This was part of the eternal plan for the Son of God. So, I want to, with you, follow Jesus into the wilderness and have a look at this situation that he was thrust into.

Before I do that, I want to ask two preliminary questions. And the first question is this, when did this happen? And you'll notice that our passage begins with the word, then.

[26 : 21] Then. In other words, the writer is highlighting for us that this experience of Jesus took place just after his baptism.

His baptism, which is his induction into his ministry. And at that baptism, the heavens were opened. And the Spirit came upon Jesus like a dove. And a voice was sounded out.

And that voice said, this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Jesus, you see, is coming as the new Adam.

As the second man. As the last Adam. As the last Adam.

[27 : 52] And God from the light. Now the last O'Bourget. The last ■■■ one. Amen. So. In white. Jesus. Amen. So. And God assures him of who he is.

This is my beloved Son. And God assures him of how much he loves him. This is my beloved Son. and God assures him of how much pleasure he has in him with whom I am well pleased and not without that assurance is Jesus thrust by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the arch-tempter and slanderer of the people of God I wonder if you knew that the word devil means slanderer the Greek word is diabolos it means slanderer there's a lesson I think here for us isn't there right away when we are faced with difficulty and trials and testing and temptation how often would part of our reaction be to remember who we belong to to remember that we are the children of God and to remember how much he loves us and what he has done for us and even to remember and that is not something that within the free church tradition maybe comes to the fore very much in our minds how much pleasure God has in us as his people and his children but there is a second question why did this happen?

I said to you a moment ago that we can understand his baptism as his induction into his ministry the ministry of redemption we can understand his being thrust into the wilderness as his probationary period maybe some ministers wonder how they'll cope new ministers I'm thinking of in their probationary period here's the probationary period of Jesus I said he was the last Adam and the second man and that's a theological key that we find in the scriptures we find Paul using it in Corinthians and we find Paul using it in Romans look out for it

Paul definitely sees Jesus as the second man he calls him the man from heaven and he sees him as the last Adam that's the phrase that he uses in other words the son of God who became a human being and I don't think we are aware of this neither as much as we ought to be nor do I think do we understand the implication of the the full implication of the humanity of Jesus I say that because I believe that we carry in our heads an idea oh it was okay for Jesus he was God I want to put it to you that Jesus did nothing in his human life that wasn't through the spirit and the will of God it's as man that is in the wilderness as the last Adam and as the man from heaven and why is he there to undo you know if you're using your technology and there's something that you've mistakenly deleted you can undo it

[32 : 44] Jesus came to undo the tragedy of the first Adam that's why he's in the wilderness and he came and we'll put this away in your pocket just now and I'll make reference to it tonight God willing notice as he comes for the baptism to John and John thinks you don't need to be baptized effectively Jesus said yes I do hold on a minute John's baptism was a baptism of repentance John's baptism was a baptism confessing sin you don't need to be baptized Jesus yes I do because I have come to fulfill all righteousness I'll see more on that tonight

I want you to think of the contrasting conditions the first Adam is in a garden a beautiful garden the first Adam has company the animals and his wife bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh the first Adam has lavish food here is the probationary period of Jesus let's just read through now for the rest of this sermon the three temptations the first one if you're the son of God now that little word if sometimes in the Greek can be and is translated since or because so it wouldn't do a great injustice to understanding what the devil is saying here is something like this given you're the son of God and you're absolutely about to perish because you've not had any food for 40 days and 40 nights and who knows what's going on in your system and in your mind naturally speaking dizzy faint weak but given you're the son of

God and you've got a mission ahead of you come on there's no bread here in the wilderness this is not the garden of Eden there's limestone there's intense heat there's exhaustion there's loneliness there's probably wild beasts given that you're son of God commanded these stones be made bread the appeal is not just to his bodily needs as you can hear from what I'm saying but to his relationship with God and behind every temptation is an unspoken aspersion against God is he really as good as you're making out if you mean so much to him why is this happening to you what is this temptation about it's about our human physical and material needs and okay it's about that but what is this temptation actually tempting us to do it's tempting to put ourselves and our human needs physical needs as paramount before everything else and before

God's will it implies that we live and have a worthwhile life only in so far as we give priority to our physical and material needs and this is the world that we are inhabiting today all the images all this is a world of visual aid a world of images and everything that's thrown at us is physical sensual sexual material glossy whether it's cars or technology or whatever it might be drink this is what you need and this is what this temptation was trying to say to Jesus are we prepared to cope with our inner demons are we able to cope with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune do we have a better sense of belonging and inner peace embracing such a point of view you know in other words what I'm saying is is the world any happier with this philosophy doesn't seem so because what I hear in the news

I'm sure you've heard it is more and more people are getting anxious more and more people are getting depressed more and more people have mental health problems more and more people are unfulfilled now the irony of this temptation is this the one that's fasted for 40 days and 40 nights the one that's being tempted to meet his physical and material needs at the expense of the will of God is the one who's the bread of life I am the bread of life is the one whom we remember in the communion and the Eucharist in the bread and the wine he's the one who cared for people without bread who hadn't any bread but he's the one who refused in that barren hostile wilderness to give in to his own needs before

[40 : 28] God second temptation then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him if you're the son of God throw yourself down and then he quotes a scripture that appears to suggest that if he would do that he's in safe hands and notice where this second temptation happens it happens in the holy city and it happens within the temple precincts and there is no place that any believing Jew would have felt more safe than there the devil knows exactly not only when but where to tempt us and I also want you to notice in a sense in one sense

I know I'm not saying everything here but in one sense how helpless Jesus is first of all he's thrust into the wilderness by the spirit secondly the devil approaches him and thirdly the devil then the devil took him to the holy city and in the final temptation the devil takes him to a very high mountain he seems to be almost at the absolute mercy of the devil and notice we'll come to the third temptation in a moment the devil seems to have the authority to say all the kingdoms of this world will I give you back to the second temptation what's it about

Jesus actually tells us what's it about in his answer to the devil in verse 7 Jesus said to him again it is written you shall not put the Lord your God to the test you shall not put the Lord your God to the test it's not your place as a created being as a human being to put God to the test Mr Devil he has the right and it is done with love and care and affection to put us to the test but we don't have any right to put him to the test that's a reference from Deuteronomy and it's also echoing

Exodus 17 where the people said to Moses as they had arrived in a place called Rephidim where there was no water and again lots of rock in the wilderness at Rephidim they said is the Lord among us or not so this temptation raises the issue of trust will we trust him we Christians only when we're experiencing carefree Christianity everything is going so well we got the job we got the house we've got children well there was one Christian couple that I met in my five years in

Robin house both were detectives both of them and their little girl who was about nine or ten she was not typical of the people that came to Robin house because the people that came to Robin house had genetic rare genetic conditions metabolic conditions or neurological conditions or all of these or a combination of these this poor little girl had cancer and she didn't make it and she spent her last weeks in Robin house I took her around Woolworths in Helensburgh she wanted to buy some gifts for her brother and in her little wheelchair and she wrote out her entire funeral okay all of us can cope with carefree

[45 : 53] Christianity Job said though he slay me yet will I trust him though he slay me yet will I trust him but I don't want you to misunderstand this if we read the book of Job we will see that Job has lots of things to say to God we'll see that Job has lots of protest lots of questions even accusations we will see that Job wishes that he had never been born so trusting God is not inconsistent with everything else that's in the book of Job it's not some sort of artificial kind of the whole of the universe is caving in among us and we've got some cheesy grin the

Bible's a lot more realistic than that all we need to do is read all the Psalms and we'll soon find that out are we judging God by our limited sight and wisdom Jesus knew the way to fulfil his redemptive mission wasn't the way of theatre and drama jumping from the top of the temple but Jesus knew the way of his redemptive mission was self-denial and sacrifice and torture and scandal there's another danger that's in this second temptation and it's this danger that we twist scripture to suit our own ends you might think would I ever do that that's what the devil tried to do he tried to come up with a scripture that sounded very very plausible sounded as if it actually fitted the situation there can be a danger that we try to twist scripture to our ends either to justify our conduct our decisions in life our creed our doctrine of theology to force passages to chime in with our preferred point of view to adopt a posture in other words of standing over scripture and seeking to control it rather than sitting under it let me ask you are you putting

God to the test are you imposing any conditions on your Christian life and on God sorry try to get through this as quickly as I can the third temptation it's to do with the offer of the kingdoms and all its splendor here we come I believe to what I want to call the great fundamental temptation and it concerns all the fundamental questions of human existence think of what's happening here the devil shows him all the kingdoms notice that word all all the kingdoms of this world we don't do they over worry too much about how could you see all the kingdoms of this world from the top of that to hill this is a lesson that we're receiving from Matthew here but he showed them all the kingdoms not just all the kingdoms of the world and their stunning glory and their glitter charm and their it concerns all the fundamental questions of our human existence

I believe this temptation what is our life about what is the meaning of our existence who or what should we worship who am I what should I base my identity on sexuality and gender the bible's answer is we're image bearers of god and we have an incurable religious impulse the bible wants to argue that we're wired to worship a lot of people sort of describe our civilization in the west today as secular I describe it as very religious we're wired to worship we need something bigger than ourselves something out with ourselves to look up to to live and die for what then or whom will we devote ourselves to self and our life and our agenda pleasure celebrity culture money and greed sports by the way

I've just mentioned some of the great idols of our day and age who have great religious followings would to god we had such followings in our churches every one of us whether we fully realize it stands at a great spiritual crossroads in our lives and we all make our choice even if we choose and so many of us have chosen what I'm about to say what one philosopher called the unexamined life that's where you don't think really about anything serious you just go with the flow and you drift what better choice is there said the devil I'll give you all the kingdoms of the world and all their stunning glory if only you'll fall down and worship me the kingdoms of this world are offered to us today and I mentioned this earlier in highly sensual and sexual terms as able to satisfy all our inmost needs and yet never as I said has more people been depressed can I ask who are you listening to are you listening to the voices of this world the voices of the devil through this world with all those faustian voices telling us this is what you need

[53 : 40] Jesus emerges triumphant from the intense and tremendous temptation of his wilderness experience not only does he survive this probationary period as I have called it but he triumphs over the most powerful tempter of evil in the entire universe and by the way everything that Jesus does you must add these two words for us and one last thing I want you to notice as we finish this narrative begins by telling us after Jesus was thrust into the wilderness in verse 3 and the tempter came the word that might be better translated here approached him approached him and you know at the very end of this narrative of the temptation of Jesus

I want you to notice this in verse 11 the devil left him and behold angels approached him or it could be translated this is a wonderful translation waited upon him attending to all of his needs how exhausted our saviour must have been and he did it for you and he did it for me indeed I don't believe it was just angels that attended him I believe it was father son and father father and spirit

that attended him through those angels and if you're a Christian today and you've said also as Jesus did no to the devil and away from me you'll be waited upon by the angels and every time that you resist a powerful test or temptation temptation to push God out of your experience and your life and you resist that you'll be attended by angels don't think this is all the temptations of Jesus concentrated here they are embodied here but until he left this earth he was tempted or tested in all points like as we are yet without sin and because he was without sin it means that he experienced like you and I never experience the full blast of every single temptation what I'm thinking of here as we give in so readily and so quickly do we follow our master in our wilderness when we are tempted to turn stones into bread putting all our needs before God when we are tempted to live a crossless Christianity by our everyday lives worshipping something or someone other than God may the Lord help us in this world of ours to do what Jesus said to the devil to worship God and only God and do not give the darling of our soul to any other being other than God himself and in so doing may we know the angel of the Lord approaching and attending to our battered at times and famished body mind and spirit may the Lord bless these thoughts to each one of us for his glory and for our eternal good we're going to conclude our service by listening to the hymn 767 who is he in yonder stall who is he in helpless soul as he see the separate call since the wrong of the story since the morning of glory and his speed and his speed the humbly fall blood in love in blood above who is he the gathering from free with love love and his love and his love and his love and his love and his love and his love and his feet we humbly call love him all in glory of all who is he who from the grave writes his glorious song to save tis the Lord a wondrous story tis the Lord the King of glory as his feet we humbly fall love him all in glory of all who is he who on the throne sits still on his place alone since the Lord the wondrous story since the Lord the King of glory at his feet we humbly fall love him all in glory of all now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think may the love of [61 : 51] God the Father the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit and forevermore Amen