

**1<sup>st</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT****ST. PETERS ANGLICAN CHURCH BUNDOORA****Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2026****Fr. Stephen Monsigneur****Readings:**<sup>1</sup> Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7 / Psalm 32 / Romans 5:12-21 / Matthew 4:1-11**Theme:** *Into the Desert of Discernment***Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7**

<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.”

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.

**Psalm 32**

<sup>1</sup>Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered.

<sup>2</sup>Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity  
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

<sup>3</sup>While I kept silent, my body wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.

<sup>4</sup>For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. *Selah*

<sup>5</sup>Then I acknowledged my sin to you,  
and I did not hide my iniquity;

I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,”  
and you forgave the guilt of my sin. *Selah*

<sup>6</sup>Therefore let all who are faithful  
offer prayer to you;  
at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters  
shall not reach them.

<sup>7</sup>You are a hiding place for me;  
you preserve me from trouble;  
you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. *Selah*

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- <sup>8</sup> I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;  
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
- <sup>9</sup> Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,  
whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle,  
else it will not stay near you.
- <sup>10</sup> Many are the torments of the wicked,  
but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.
- <sup>11</sup> Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous,  
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

### **Romans 5:12-21**

- <sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned— <sup>13</sup> for sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. <sup>14</sup> Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam, who is a pattern of the one who was to come.
- <sup>15</sup> But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. <sup>16</sup> And the gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the gift following many trespasses brings justification. <sup>17</sup> If, because of the one man's trespass, death reigned through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.
- <sup>18</sup> Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. <sup>19</sup> For just as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. <sup>20</sup> But law came in, so that the trespass might increase, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, <sup>21</sup> so that, just as sin reigned in death, so grace might also reign through justification leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **Matthew 4:1-11**

- Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. <sup>2</sup> He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward 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 glory, <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> Then 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.

## SERMON

The desert is never a place we choose. It is a place we are *led*. Scripture tells this truth again and again: God brings people into barren spaces not to break them, but to reveal what is true, what is false, and what is possible when trust becomes our only nourishment.

In Genesis, the garden is abundant, ordered, and safe. Adam is placed there “to till it and keep it”<sup>2</sup>. Yet even in this place of blessing, the human heart is vulnerable to voices that distort God’s word. The serpent’s whisper—“Did God say...?”<sup>3</sup> —is the first desert moment. It is the moment when trust is tested, when the clarity of God’s command becomes clouded by suspicion. The fall is not simply disobedience; it is the turning of the heart toward self-reliance, the belief that life can be secured apart from God<sup>4</sup>.

Psalm 32 speaks into this ancient wound. The psalmist knows the heaviness of hiding, the dryness of a soul cut off from truth. Yet he also knows the relief of confession and the joy of forgiveness: “You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble”<sup>5</sup>. The desert becomes a place where God’s mercy finds us, where the burden of self-sufficiency is lifted, and where we learn again to be held.

Paul, in Romans 5, draws the great arc from Adam to Christ. Through one human’s turning away came sin and death; through one human’s faithful obedience came grace and life<sup>6</sup>. The desert, then, is not simply a place of testing but a place of reversal. Where Adam grasped, Christ relinquished. Where Adam doubted, Christ trusted. Where Adam hid, Christ stood firm. The desert becomes the landscape where humanity’s story is rewritten.

This is clearest in Matthew’s account of Jesus’ temptation. Fresh from baptism, named the Beloved, Jesus is “led up by the Spirit into the wilderness”<sup>7</sup>. The Spirit does not abandon him there; the Spirit accompanies him. The temptations he faces are not exotic—they are the same temptations that shape our own lives: to secure ourselves through possessions, to seek validation through spectacle, to grasp power through compromise<sup>8</sup>. Each time, Jesus is tempted, he answers not with argument but with Scripture, and so grounding himself in the truth Adam forgot: life is received, not seized; identity is given, not earned; authority is exercised through obedience, not domination.

The desert is where Jesus chooses trust over fear, fidelity over shortcuts, and God’s word over every false promise. And because he walks this path, our own deserts—those seasons of uncertainty, pressure, loneliness, or moral struggle—are no longer signs of abandonment.

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<sup>2</sup> Genesis 2:15

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 3:1

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 3:6–7

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 32:7

<sup>6</sup> Romans 5:12–21

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 4:1

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 4:3–10

They are invitations. They are places where God strips away illusions so that grace can take root.

Lent calls us into this same journey. Not to punish us, but to free us. To help us hear again the voice that names us beloved. To teach us that even in the driest places, God is already at work, shaping us into people who live by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Let us pray,

God of mercy, lead us through every desert we face. Strengthen our trust, steady our steps, and renew our hearts, that we may walk in your light and live in your grace. Amen.