



## Pastor's Page

### ***Tempting Providence***

What a dilemma! It's the first major final of the Football season, the first major trophy to be played for and my team are competing for it and also .....it's on 'normal' television! So what's the dilemma? I've given TV up for lent! Well that should be the end of it except that traditionally the Sundays in lent are a break from the 'fast' so I can legitimately watch the match! Amen! But just a minute.....why am I fasting from the TV in Lent anyway? Well my reason is that it gives me a chance to check my priorities – It gives me the chance to test whether I would give things up for the Lord if he asked me to. The biggest challenge in terms of the TV for me is - football and my beloved team. This match (Carling Cup Final) is the first big challenge for me – so will I fall at the opening hurdle? I genuinely haven't decided what I will do! Perhaps looking at how Jesus dealt with temptation will help me make up my mind. (Here we go;)

We read in the bible that immediately following his baptism Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert where for 40 days he was tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1,2 Mark 1:12,13) I instantly notice that he didn't have Sundays off!! (I could be in trouble here!) Whatever else is going on Jesus is clearly in a battle. He has just been baptised and has heard a voice from heaven say "This is my son whom I love with him I am well pleased" What an affirmation. And the Spirit of God leads him into the desert to be tempted (a better translation apparently is "tested") by the devil. The testing seems to be regarding;

1. his identity ("if you are the Son Of God") and
2. his ministry - will he use his God-given powers for selfish gain – satisfying his human desires (stones to bread) performing spectacular but pointless miracles (jumping off the temple) and acquiring worldly splendour ("all this I will give to you") or for the good of humanity?

Will he follow the voice from Heaven or the voice from Hell? Will he choose the path of compromise or the way of sacrifice? For the way of sacrifice is the way of the cross. Thank God that Jesus chose the way of the cross for you and me.

Now our temptations may be very different to the unique testing of the Son of God in the desert but as Bishop Tom Wright says; *"The temptations we all face day by day, and at critical moments of decision and vocation in our lives have exactly the same point. They are not simply trying to entice us into committing this or that sin. They are trying to distract us, to turn us aside from the path of servant-hood to which our baptism has commissioned us. God has a costly but wonderfully glorious vocation for each one of us. The enemy will do everything possible to distract us and thwart God's purpose. If we have heard God's voice welcoming us as his children, we will also hear the whispered suggestions of the enemy. But as God's children...store scripture in your heart, and know how to use it. Keep your eyes on God and trust him for everything. Remember your calling to bring God's light into the world. And say a firm "no" to the voices that lure you back into the darkness"* (Powerful stuff indeed!)

So where does this leave me and that football match? Well, hard as the sacrifice might be - it can't be as hard as staring at stones when you're starving!

28<sup>th</sup> January 2010