

Silent Visitor

United Reformed Church
Grays



March 2018

Temptation

I was on a troopship en route for Singapore. A colleague of mine had become involved in an argument with two Air Traffic Controllers who were also bound for Singapore. Both of them were professed atheists and had claimed to my colleague (I'll call him Brian) that nothing showed better that God did not exist than the words in the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." "What sort of God would do that sort of thing?" they questioned. Brian, lost for words, turned to me for help but I was also lost for words. I tried to belittle their argument, a sure sign of someone who has no positive answer to give. What should I have said?

We are certainly not more capable of resisting temptation than Jesus was and as a truly human being He was often tempted. We know that, in particular, He was tempted whilst He was in the desert after fasting for a long time. Who led Him there? It was the Holy Spirit, specifically to see Him tempted by the devil, the bible's personification of the power of evil. He was in a weakened condition and God was about to put Him to the test before He could engage in His ministry. He was to understand that it would be a struggle to remain faithful to God.

So we should not be surprised if we are tempted. We then have to undertake the struggle ourselves to remain faithful to God. Sometimes we will lose that struggle but, in theory, we should be capable always of winning it as Jesus did. That's because He was also human as we are human. We must recognise, however, that Jesus alone is capable of always winning that struggle.

Fortunately help is at hand! Since Jesus Himself has suffered and knows what it has been like to be truly tempted, He is able to help those who themselves are tempted. Hebrews 4: 15 says, "We have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin." Pope Benedict XVI tells us that Jesus' temptations were with Him every step of the way during His mission.

Some people like to do (or not to do) something as a mark of Lent. What about making an extra effort to defeat the temptations of the bible's devil that will inevitably arise? Why not put an extra emphasis on saying, "NO!"

We have to make choices. Look at it this way. At the culmination of Jesus' trial, Pilate gives the people a choice. Who do they want to save,

Jesus or Barabbas? Barabbas was a prominent freedom fighter, a prospective saviour of the Jews. That makes him something of a messiah himself. Pilate was confronting the people with a choice between two messiahs. The name Barabbas means 'son of the father'. Jesus was the Son of the Father. Barabbas offered them hope for a physically better life. Jesus offered them hope for the future. We know which the people opted for.

If we were to be offered a similar choice today, who would we choose? In these modern times there could be a great temptation to opt for Barabbas. Could we resist that temptation? If offered Barabbas, could we say, "NO!" None of us wants to suffer temptation but we can't avoid it. As we come towards Easter we can strengthen our resolve by saying more often (daily?) the Lord's Prayer, paying particular attention to the words, "Lead us not into temptation."

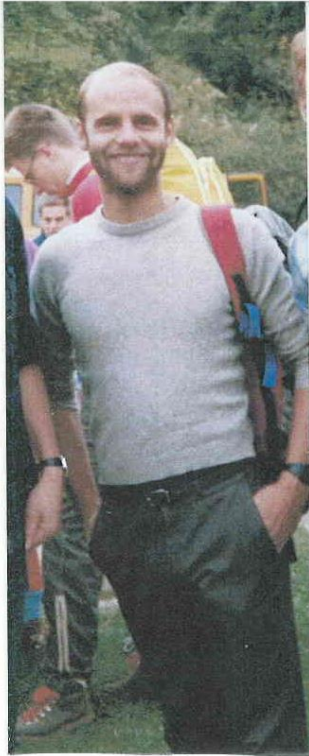
George Semain

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory
For ever and ever. Amen.



Steve Weiss **Died 31 January 2018**



Steve was connected with 7th Grays for over 18 years between 1975 and 1993 helping with the Scouts Section on a regular basis at meetings. He was also involved with many of the adventurous activities run for Scouts. In particular with hill walking and mountaineering in Wales, the Lake District and Scotland, taking parties of Scouts to these areas and introducing many young people both from 7th Grays and the rest of Thurrock Scouts to these activities. Steve learnt his mountaineering skills partly through being self-taught through years of experience and partly by attending Mountain Leadership courses, giving up his time to attend these courses so that he could safely take young people away.

Steve was also involved with the amateur radio station that was set up at the Scout Hut for the Scouts Annual "Jamboree On The Air" event. With this event Scouts were able to speak directly over the airwaves with Scouts in many different parts of the World. This was before global communication was anywhere near as common as it is today. Some people may remember on occasions when the radio interfered with the Church organ during a service and the voice of the radio operator could be heard coming out of the organ speakers.

By profession Steve was an industrial chemist and spent most of his working life at Littlebrook Power Station and also lately working on the decommissioning of Tilbury Power Station.

Steve is survived by his wife Lin and daughters Katherine and Elizabeth.

Tim Webb

News of the Family

A few of our members and friends have been absent from church for a while due to feeling unwell. We think of them and wish them a speedy recovery so that they may join us in worship once again.

We ask God's blessing on all those in the congregation who are housebound and continue to remember Joyce Fraser, Doreen Thomas and Eileen Henry in our thoughts and prayers.

Induction of New Minister

Rev'd David Coaker's Service of Induction as our Minister is on 14 April at 2pm.

This is a reminder for you to let Elaine know whether you will be at the Service which will be followed with refreshments.

Please let Elaine know by the 11 April or sooner if possible.

Easter Sunday Breakfast

Following the 8 am Service on Easter Sunday 1 April, there will be Continental breakfast in the Church Hall.

Please see the list on the Notice Board in the hall and add your name if you would like to stay for breakfast.

There will be a charge in the region of £5 per person (children free).

Cake Sales

The Scouts will be holding regular cake sales after Parade Services to raise funds for some of their scouts who will be travelling to a scouting event in West Virginia in 2019. £90 was raised at the sale on the 18 February.

Church Meeting

A reminder that the Annual Meeting is on Sunday 4 March following morning service (1st Sunday in the month).

Amritsar to Gravesend

India was somewhere that I never wanted to go to, until I took a notion to go there! I don't think a country will have had quite the wonderful impact on me that India did.

Along with the Taj Mahal and Ranthambore National Park, the Golden Temple in Amritsar was a highlight of my recent tour of the Golden Triangle in the Punjab, North West India not far from the border with Pakistan. The Golden Temple is the holiest Gurdwara (Sikh place of worship) and the most important pilgrimage site of Sikhism.

We were lucky to visit the Temple twice. We visited in the evening, to witness the Palki Sahib ceremony which carries the Sri Guru Granth Sahib from the Temple and the next day to walk round the Temple. We had the privilege of walking round the Langhar, the free Sikh community kitchen which serves around 40,000 pilgrims free of charge every day and opportunity to roll out roti, small flat breads for the pilgrims to eat.



Langhar



Golden Temple

Without exception, while the temple was heaving with crowds, we felt it was a very peaceful and spiritual place.

Amritsar was smoggy and smelt heavily of pollution, The Golden Temple complex was an oasis within the poor streets. The poverty we saw in India was heartbreaking at times, the filth, rubbish and extreme poverty, in stark contrast to the magnificent Golden Temple. However everyone is welcome at the Temple and everyone is treated the same.

Both visits to the Golden Temple were very moving and humbling as was so much of India itself, stark contrast between rich and poor, pollution, dodging sacred cows and other animals that choose to snooze in the middle of the road, poor children sitting in gutters begging for food and amazingly happy Indian people full of smiles who can't do enough for tourists visiting this amazing country.

Liz Semain



You might not relish the thought of a passage to India. If so, you might prefer to take the ferry to Gravesend where, within walking distance, you can find another Gurdwara, or Sikh Temple, almost on our doorsteps. This is a magnificent building with ornate features. If visiting you will be asked to remove your shoes and cover your heads. You are warmly welcomed by a Sikh guide who will explain the Gurdwara to you and answer any questions.

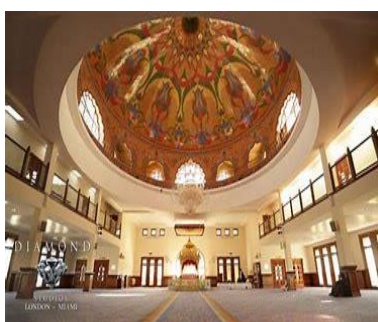
From there you are free to wander at will. There is a Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Sacred Book, displayed in several rooms, the main one, the Diwan Hall being beautifully decorated. If you wish to approach the sacred book you will be expected to kneel as a mark of respect. On leaving the hall you will be offered some Degh, a mixture of wheat flour prepared with melted butter and water. It is quite sweet but receiving a portion and eating it will be appreciated. It's a bit like taking bread at Holy Communion but with different connotations.

After visiting the Diwan Hall you may follow the corridor to the Langhar Hall, as at Amritsar. Here you will be offered a tray containing a small curry and accompaniments together with a cup of Chai tea, also rather sweet. Most sit on the carpeted floor for this but tables are available.

On leaving you will have visited a place which reflects a religion of love, service and sacrifice, much of which applies to our own. You will almost certainly feel that your visit has been worthwhile.



Temple



Diwan Hall



Staircase

Ed.

LONELINESS

Over the past few months there has been publicity about people feeling lonely and suggesting reasons why this occurs. It often tends to be an ageing thing and we are aware that within our neighbourhoods over the years there has been a drastic change in neighbourliness.

Houses change hands and for no other reason than people are busy with their own lives the opportunity to get to know one another doesn't arise as it seemed to do a few decades ago.

I remember when we moved into our house we were a couple with a young family and some of our neighbours were probably the age we are now! But whilst living along a busy long road you cannot expect to know all the people in all the houses. We did, however, know our immediate neighbours who enjoyed a chat and a cup of tea/coffee etc.

The culture seems to have changed throughout the country and although we do know some of our neighbours, our relationship is not as it used to be. Is it a lack of interest or is it that everyone is a lot busier than they used to be? Who knows? The result especially for single elderly people can be loneliness and isolation.

Consequently, I thought I would share with you via the Silent Visitor the knowledge that there is a "Social Afternoon" held at Blackshots Senior Citizens Bowls Club at Blackshots Bowls Complex next to the Civic Hall on Tuesdays from 2pm.

They issue a general invitation which says :-

"Why not pop along and enjoy a chat or a game of cards over a cuppa. You might like a quiz or a board game. The choice is yours. Anyone can come. Don't be isolated and stuck at home alone. Come and make some new friends. It costs 50p a session. Just turn up." (Original leaflet on the notice board in the Hall)

Might be an idea if anyone is feeling at a loose end!



Janet Semain

GIVING UP PLASTIC?

Alf reminded us in his recent Service on Parade Sunday about the damage the overuse of plastic is causing to our environment.

The Church of England, as part of Lent, has asked what should we give up for Lent. It is suggesting that as well as the usual things of smoking, cursing, eating crisps and chocolate we should think about giving up plastic.

There are suggestions that we should cut down on buying water in plastic bottles and get back to good old tap water in a reusable container.

We are being urged not to use drinking straws and throwaway coffee cups and in answer to this, some coffee shops are recycling these cups if they are returned.

The majority of man-made plastics are not bio-degradable meaning they will not rot. In addition, not all plastic can be recycled. For animals, the danger comes from being entangled in plastic bags and other debris, or mistaking plastic for food. Larger pieces of plastic can also damage the digestive systems of animals and can be potentially fatal. You only have to see the amount of plastic waste washed up along the River Thames at Purfleet for evidence of its pollution.

Effort is being made to reduce the problem of plastic waste. An example is the Scottish Parliament having announced plans to ban plastic straws, following similar announcements by a number of restaurant chains.

Lent lasts from Ash Wednesday until Easter Sunday, which this year falls on 1 April – a period of 40 days plus six Sundays. It marks the time Jesus went into the desert to fast and pray. Millions of Christians around the world mark Lent by fasting on certain days, giving up something they enjoy or by making a new pledge.

Maybe we can make a pledge to ourselves to cut down the amount of plastic waste that leaves our homes in our wheelie-bins each week - not just for Lent but throughout the whole year and beyond!



Janet Semain



SERVICES

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| 10.30 am | SUNDAY FAMILY SERVICE |
| 10.30 am | 1 st SUNDAY EACH MONTH HOLY COMMUNION |
| 6.30 pm | 3 rd SUNDAY EACH MONTH HOLY COMMUNION |
| 10.30 am | 3 rd SUNDAY EACH MONTH PARADE SERVICE |

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Website: graysurc.org.uk

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