

Sunday 22 February 2026
The First Sunday of Lent

Collect:

Heavenly Father,
your Son battled with the powers of darkness,
and grew closer to you in the desert:
help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer
that we may witness to your saving love
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings for this week:

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7; Psalm 32; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

Lent opens up space to reflect upon what it means to be responsible and obedient to God's will rather than following a path of unfettered self-will. In Genesis' description of the Fall, the first woman and man take time to examine the forbidden fruit. Their conclusions that it is good for food, a delight to the eyes and releases wisdom overruled, in their minds, God's injunction, and therefore they choose self-interest over faithfulness to God. The result is an instant end to innocence, and cycles of sin, repentance and forgiveness are born. Psalm 32 echoes those cycles. The Psalmist acknowledges their sinfulness, repenting of it. In response God brings forgiveness (although, of course, God may also forgive where there has been no repentance), but also instruction, bringing the penitent back to the role and task for which they had been called. Adam and Eve had also been given a divine task – to tend and cultivate the Garden of Eden – which they rejected in favour of the serpent's advice.

Paul's description in Romans of Jesus as the new Adam develops from the Gospel. The relationship between sin and grace, which runs through the Lenten season, is a dominant theme in this Letter. The original Adam's readiness to be swayed by the serpent and to disobey God results in an immediate catastrophe that engulfs humanity, and by association, all creation. Sin divides and destroys, people fight for their own desires and justice is trampled on. The universal disaster of sin can only be countered by a corresponding universal grace, which Paul finds in Jesus' complete obedience to God.

In the Gospel, Jesus hears the same siren voice as Adam did, but resists its serpentine reasoning. He is tempted to a literal fall from the pinnacle of the temple, and in refusing to comply begins to break the power of sin that entered the world at the universal Fall. Genesis, and the rest of the Hebrew Bible, describes many times when the chosen people were tempted away from God's will, some of which are alluded to in this passage. When Jesus chooses the path of obedience, God confirms his authority as the divine Son, opening a gateway for grace to enter and redemption to take root.

Lord God,
you have renewed us with the living bread from heaven;
by it you nourish our faith,
increase our hope, and strengthen our love:
teach us always to hunger for him who is the true and living bread,
and enable us to live by every word
that proceeds from out of your mouth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings for next week:

Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121; Romans 4:1-5, 13-17; John 3:1-17
Second Sunday of Lent