

**Written Service Sunday March 9th 2025**  
**A service of worship for use at home**  
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Nottingham North East  
Methodist Circuit  
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**Lent 1 Soul Food**

**Soul Food Lent Liturgy**

Give us this day our daily bread to feed our soul.

We don't need distractions of a glitzy package,  
a brown paper bag does just fine.

Give us this day our daily bread to feed our soul.

To nourish our minds and warm our hearts,  
to enrich our faith, our belief, our life...  
Give us this day our daily bread to feed our soul.

Let us never forget you are our God,  
the giver of love and joy and hope.  
O Lord our God, on this Lenten journey,  
feed our souls this day we pray. **Amen.**

**HYMN** O Christ: Our Bread, Life and Light Tune. StF 311 – The Day of Resurrection

O Christ, you walk beside us through desert winds so dry,  
Your word alone sustains us, your love is ever nigh.  
Though tempter's voice may call us to turn from what is true,  
Yet still your grace upholds us and leads our hearts to you.

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inspired by the Methodist Church's 2025 Lent Campaign, 'Soul Food.'

**Opening Prayers**

Holy God, you are a creative God, weaving our lives together into community, creating space for each of us to flourish and thrive. Today, we commit ourselves once more into your hands, may our lives become the tools to build your kingdom here on earth.

Today, our prayers are for all involved in creativity and productivity, all who produce new things in order to create life, fulfil potential and enable each of us to flourish.

Holy God, we bring you our prayers of thanks and praise – and ask you to weave them together by your spirit, like a basket, the empty vessel, the storage place, the offering plate, the fruit bowl, the bread holder, the coin collector. A basket of prayers, which has many uses, and each design is suited to a particular need.

As we look out on your world, help us to listen, with an attentive ear, to the role you have called us to play, to meet the needs we are called to, to make use of our skills in the building of your kingdom. Gracious God, weave our lives as the basket weaver weaves. Weave our lives by your love we pray.  
**Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

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.

## Introduction | Soul Food for the Journey: Resisting Temptation

Some of you may remember the WWJD bracelets that became popular in the 1990s. Do you remember what WWJD stood for? *What Would Jesus Do?* It was a simple but powerful reminder to reflect on Jesus' actions when faced with choices.

Lent is a season of reflection and preparation—a time to consider our spiritual nourishment, our *Soul Food*. What sustains us in times of struggle? What gives us strength when we face temptation? Jesus, at the very start of his ministry, spent 40 days in the wilderness. He fasted, he prayed, and he prepared. And in his weakest moments, he was tempted—tempted to satisfy his hunger, tempted by power, and tempted to prove his identity.

1. **The temptation of food** – Jesus was starving, yet when the devil suggested turning stones into bread, he refused. Not because food is bad, but because he knew that true sustenance comes from God: "*Man shall not live on bread alone.*"
2. **The temptation of power** – The devil offered Jesus authority over all the kingdoms of the world. But Jesus knew that real power does not come from status or control—it comes from serving God.
3. **The temptation to test God** – The devil dared Jesus to throw himself from the temple, twisting Scripture to suggest God would save him. But Jesus responded with wisdom, refusing to manipulate God's promises for personal gain.
- 4.

Each time, Jesus responded with Scripture. His *Soul Food*—his spiritual nourishment—was rooted in God's word and his trust in the Father.

Lent invites us to examine our own sources of nourishment. What do we turn to when we are struggling—when we feel empty, lonely, or in need? Do we seek comfort in things that do not truly satisfy? Or do we, like Jesus, turn to God for strength?

Perhaps this Lent, we can ask ourselves not just *What Would Jesus Do?* but also *What nourishes my soul?* How can I feed my spirit in a way that draws me closer to God?

As we journey through Lent, may we be mindful of what sustains us. May we choose *Soul Food* that gives life, strengthens faith, and helps us resist the temptations that pull us away from God. **Amen.**

## Hymn - StF 317 At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow

At the name of Jesus  
Ev'ry knee shall bow,  
Ev'ry tongue confess him  
King of glory now;  
'Tis the Father's pleasure  
We should call him Lord,  
Who from the beginning  
Was the mighty Word.

Humbled for a season  
To receive a name  
From the lips of sinners,  
Amongst whom he came.  
Faithfully he bore it,  
Spotless to the last,  
Brought it back victorious  
When from death he passed.

In your hearts enthrone him!  
There let him subdue  
All that is not holy,  
All that is not true.  
Crown him as your Captain,  
In temptation's hour;  
Let his will enfold you  
In its light and pow'r.

Kindred, this Lord Jesus  
Shall return again  
With his Father's glory,  
With his angel train,  
For all wreaths of empire  
Meet upon his brow,  
And our hearts confess him  
King of glory now.

## Old Testament Reading | Psalm 91: 1-2, 9-16

<sup>1</sup>You who live in the shelter of the Most High,  
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>2</sup>will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my  
fortress;  
my God, in whom I trust.'

<sup>9</sup>Because you have made the Lord your  
refuge,<sup>[a]</sup>

the Most High your dwelling-place,

<sup>10</sup>no evil shall befall you,

no scourge come near your tent.

<sup>11</sup>For he will command his angels concerning  
you to guard you in all your ways.

<sup>12</sup>On their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a  
stone.

<sup>13</sup>You will tread on the lion and the adder,  
the young lion and the serpent you will  
trample under foot.

<sup>14</sup>Those who love me, I will deliver;  
I will protect those who know my name.

<sup>15</sup>When they call to me, I will answer them;  
I will be with them in trouble,  
I will rescue them and honour them.

<sup>16</sup>With long life I will satisfy them,  
and show them my salvation.

## Gospel Reading | Luke 4: 1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, <sup>2</sup>where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. <sup>3</sup>The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.' <sup>4</sup>Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone."'

<sup>5</sup>Then the devil<sup>[a]</sup> led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup>And the devil<sup>[b]</sup> said to him, 'To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. <sup>7</sup>If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.' <sup>8</sup>Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."'

<sup>9</sup>Then the devil<sup>[c]</sup> took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, <sup>10</sup>for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,” <sup>11</sup>and “On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.”’ <sup>12</sup>Jesus answered him, ‘It is said, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’ <sup>13</sup>When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

## **Sermon | Soul Food – Trusting in God’s Provision and Resisting the Powers of the World**

This year, as part of the Methodist Church’s *Soul Food* campaign, we are invited to reflect on what truly nourishes us—what feeds our bodies, minds, and spirits. Today, we begin at the beginning – a very good place to start I hear you say! Lent draws us into the wilderness, not as a place of punishment, but as a place of deep reflection. It is here, in hunger and vulnerability, that Jesus confronts the forces that shape human existence—scarcity, power, and security. These temptations are not abstract; they are embedded in the very structures of our world.

Who has enough to eat, and who does not?  
Who holds power, and at what cost?  
Who is made to feel worthy, and who is cast aside?

Jesus enters the wilderness at a critical moment. He has just been baptised, affirmed by the voice from heaven as the beloved Son, yet before He steps into public ministry, He must walk through this place of testing. The wilderness is not an easy place, but it is a necessary one. It is where faith is shaped, illusions are stripped away, and the struggle for justice and truth begins.

### **The First Temptation: Scarcity and Survival**

*"If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread."*

At the heart of this temptation is the question: what does it mean to trust in God when hunger is real? Jesus had been fasting for forty days; His body was aching for nourishment. In a world where food insecurity is a daily reality for millions, this temptation is not distant. Families across the world are forced to choose between feeding their children or paying rent. In war-torn regions, supply chains are deliberately severed to starve populations into submission. Even in wealthy nations, food banks struggle to meet demand while supermarket shelves remain stocked for those who can afford them. Jesus does not deny the urgency of hunger, but He refuses to accept the logic that provision must come at the cost of dependence on worldly powers. *"One does not live by bread alone."* This is not a dismissal of physical hunger—it is a call to resist systems that commodify basic needs and to reject the idea that life is only about securing enough for oneself. True provision comes from God and is meant to be shared. Jesus’ response challenges a world where hunger persists not because there isn’t enough food, but because resources are hoarded, and access is controlled.

### **The Second Temptation: Power and Oppression**

*"To you I will give all this authority and their glory... If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."*

The tempter’s offer exposes the nature of power in the world: it is something to be seized, traded, and manipulated. Jesus is shown the kingdoms of the world—the structures that determine who rules and who is ruled, who thrives and who suffers. The temptation is clear: take control, claim dominion, impose justice from the top down.

How often have the oppressed been offered a false choice: conform to the systems of power or be crushed by them? Colonised nations were told they could have “progress” if they accepted foreign rule. Workers are promised fair wages only if they do not question corporate greed. Women in

patriarchal cultures are given a seat at the table only if they do not challenge the very structures that exclude them. The cost of power, the tempter suggests, is submission to its terms.

Jesus refuses. *“Worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him.”* True power does not come from domination but from faithfulness. Jesus’ response is a warning against the temptation to seek change through oppressive means. Justice cannot be won by adopting the tactics of empire. The kingdom of God is not built on deals with the devil but on radical, self-giving love.

### **The Third Temptation: Identity and Worth**

*“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you.’”*

This final test is about identity. The tempter demands proof—if you truly are who God says you are, then force God’s hand. Let the world see undeniable signs of divine favour.

Many today face this same temptation: prove your worth, justify your existence, show that you belong.

- Refugees are asked to prove they are “good immigrants” before being granted safety.
- Survivors of abuse are questioned about whether their suffering was “bad enough” to be believed.
- Those struggling with mental health are asked to justify why they need help.

The demand is always the same: prove yourself, because your worth is not assumed.

But Jesus refuses to perform. He does not need to test God’s faithfulness, because He already knows it. His identity is not up for debate. And in that refusal, He declares that God’s love is not conditional.

It does not depend on displays of power or forced demonstrations of worth. It simply is.

For all who have been told they must prove themselves, Jesus’ response is a powerful affirmation: you are enough. You do not need to test God’s love—it has already been given.

### **The Wilderness as a Place of Resistance**

Jesus’ time in the wilderness is not just about personal discipline; it is about resistance. He resists a world where people must fight for their own survival while others hoard abundance. He resists systems where power is secured through oppression. He resists a culture that demands people justify their worth. And He does so not with force, but with trust.

Lent invites us into this same resistance. It is a time to examine the ways we have been shaped by the logic of scarcity, power, and worthiness. It is a time to ask where we place our trust.

- Do we believe that security comes from accumulating wealth?
- Do we believe that change must come through the politics of dominance?
- Do we secretly believe that God’s love must be earned?

To follow Jesus is to walk through the wilderness, not alone, but led by the Spirit. It is to trust that God provides, even when resources seem scarce. It is to reject the kind of power that demands submission. It is to rest in the truth that we are already beloved. And it is to stand in solidarity with all who are told otherwise.

Lent is a time of fasting—but also a time of feasting on the things that truly sustain us:

- The nourishment of God’s Word, which reminds us that life is more than material wealth.
- The presence of God’s Spirit, which strengthens us to resist the world’s broken systems.
- The assurance of God’s love, which needs no proof, no performance, no justification.

As we begin this Lenten journey, may we, like Jesus, resist the temptation to seek easy answers. May we learn to trust in God’s provision, to reject the world’s distorted views of power, and to rest in the truth that we are already beloved.

And may we be a source of “soul food” to those around us, pointing to the God who truly sustains.

**Amen.**

## Hymn - StF 236 Forty days and forty nights

Forty days and forty nights  
you were fasting in the wild;  
forty days and forty nights  
tempted, and yet undefiled.

Burning heat throughout the day,  
bitter cold when light had fled;  
prowling beasts about your way;  
stones your pillow; earth your bed.

Shall not we your trials share,  
learn your discipline of will;  
and with you by fast and prayer  
wrestle with the powers of hell.

So if Satan, pressing hard,  
Soul and body would destroy:  
Christ who conquered, be our guard;  
give to us the victor's joy.

Watching, praying, struggling thus,  
victory shall be ours too;  
angels minister to us,  
as they ministered to you.

Saviour may we hear your voice;  
Keep us constant at your side;  
and with you we shall rejoice  
at the eternal Eastertide.

### Prayers of Intercession

God of the wilderness,  
You journeyed with Jesus through hunger and trial,  
And You walk with us today.

**Empower us to act justly,  
And guide us in Your truth.**

We pray for those who struggle to survive—  
For those who are hungry while food is wasted,  
For those denied shelter while homes stand empty,  
For those whose dignity is questioned because of their poverty.  
Give us hearts that do not simply pray, but act.

**Open our eyes to see, and our hands to serve.**

We pray for those caught in the grip of power—  
For those who are silenced for speaking truth,  
For those who resist injustice at great cost,  
For those whose lives are controlled by forces beyond their choosing.  
Give us courage to stand alongside them.

**Strengthen our voices for justice, and our feet for the journey.**

We pray for those who long for belonging—  
For those told they must prove their worth,  
For those who have been excluded from communities of faith,  
For those who wonder if they are truly loved.  
May they hear Your voice, calling them Beloved.

**Help us to welcome, embrace, and love without condition.**

(Space for silent or personal prayers.)

God of truth and justice,  
Teach us to resist the false promises of the world.  
Lead us through the wilderness,  
That we may walk in faith, in love, and in the power of Your Spirit.

**Guide our hearts and hands to build Your kingdom,  
Through Christ, our refuge and Redeemer. Amen.**

**Hymn** - StF 238 Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us  
o'er the world's tempestuous sea;  
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,  
for we have no help but thee;  
yet possessing every blessing,  
if our God our Father be.

Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us:  
all our weakness thou dost know;  
thou didst tread this earth before us,  
thou didst feel its keenest woe;  
lone and dreary, faint and weary,  
through the desert thou didst go.

Spirit of our God, descending,  
fill our hearts with heavenly joy,  
love with every passion blending,  
pleasure that can never cloy:  
thus provided, pardoned, guided,  
nothing can our peace destroy.

**Blessing**

Go in peace, and seek to play your part,  
Go in grace, and remember that all is a gift,  
Go in love, and show that love to every person who you meet,  
Go in hope, believing a better world is possible. **Amen.**