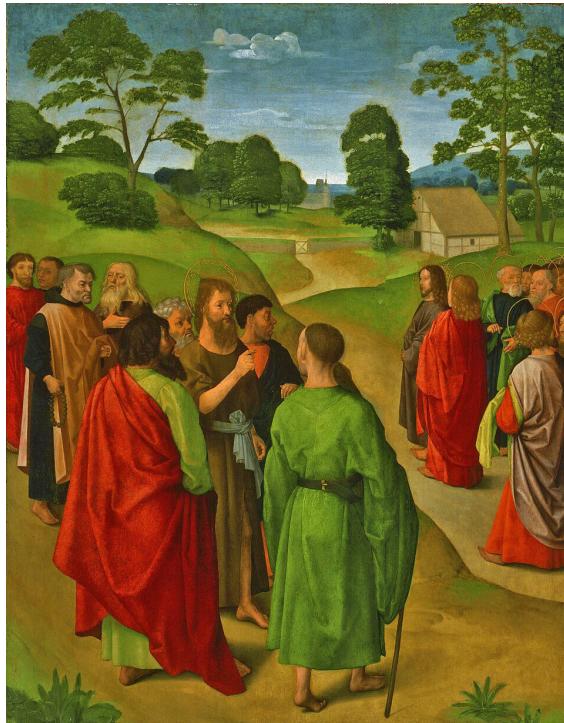




The conversations begin



Saint John the Baptist Pointing Out Christ as the Lamb of God, 1510 anon



When have you faced a moment of testing or decision that shaped the direction of your life?

What helped you find your footing?

Jesus and the Tempter

(Read Matthew 4:1–11)

The wilderness brings both emptiness and encounter. After Jesus was baptised in the Jordan, he was led by the Spirit to this quiet place and a challenge, to affirm his true role. The three questions beginning, ‘If you are the Son of God...’ are not so much about bread or the power that is uniquely his – but how Jesus will live out his true identity as God’s Son.

The temptation is perhaps one that is familiar to many, choosing to take the easy way out, which in this example shortcuts hunger, suffering, and trust.

Jesus answers each challenge with words grounded in Scripture. In the

silence of the wilderness, he affirms his dependence upon his Father’s word rather than his own strength.

Jesus knew from the very first moments of his earthly ministry that this would be a combination of kingship and suffering servanthood, affirmed by the heavenly voice at his baptism in the Jordan, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with whom I am well pleased.’



Which of the three temptations feels most familiar or subtle to you, and why?

What do you notice about how Jesus uses Scripture in response?

How might this story shape the way we face our own 'wilderness times'?

Jesus and the First Disciples

(Read John 1:35–51)

If the wilderness tested Jesus' identity, this part of the story reveals it, and is filled with conversation. John the Baptist points two of his disciples toward Jesus as 'the Lamb of God.' Intrigued, they make their way toward Jesus who turns and challenges their motives, asking 'What do you want?'

Jesus wanted to know whether this was just idle curiosity or something deeper, a desire to know and learn from him. They address Jesus as 'Rabbi', a term of respect for a Jewish teacher, and so he encourages them to spend time getting to know him. They may well have stayed overnight.

Then the pace of John's story increases, through conversations between Simon Peter, Andrew, Philip, Nathanael, possibly John the writer, and of course Jesus.

Jesus calls his disciples via an open door rather than a command. These early conversations set the tone for discipleship through seeking, responding, and walking alongside. Like those first followers, we're invited to explore rather than to have everything figured out.



What do you think Jesus' question 'What do you want?' means for us today?

How does the simple invitation 'Come and see...' describe Christian faith?

How might this passage help us think about sharing faith with others?

'Lent is the favourable season for renewing our encounter with Christ, living in his word, in the sacraments and in our neighbour. The Lord, who overcame the deceptions of the Tempter during the forty days in the desert, shows us the path we must take. May the Holy Spirit lead us on a true journey of conversion, so that we can rediscover the gift of God's word, be purified of the sin that blinds us, and serve Christ present in our brothers and sisters in need.'

(Pope Francis)

'The goal of fasting is inner unity. This means hearing, but not with the ear; hearing, but not with the understanding; it is hearing with the spirit, with your whole being.' (Thomas Merton)

Jesus in the Synagogue

(Read Luke 4:16–30)

Having faced temptation and gathered his first disciples, Jesus returns home to Nazareth where he grew up, and in the synagogue declares his mission. Reading Isaiah's promise, he claims that 'Today this scripture is fulfilled.'

At first, those gathered seem enthusiastic about his teaching about God's grace and proclaiming good news, and initial conversations afterwards were positive, albeit focussed on Jesus being Joseph's son rather than the Son of God. But at some point, hostility begins, along with growing disbelief that a boy growing up in their local

community as a carpenter's son could ever make such incredible claims.

Jesus knew that his calling would not be easy, and his continuing conversation with them proves this, as they drive him out of town.

Faithfulness to God's mission can provoke resistance, especially when it challenges comfort or assumption. Yet even rejection doesn't deter Jesus, who walks through the angry crowd and continues his path. The road to the Cross has begun.



Why do you think the crowd's attitude shifts so dramatically in this story?

What does this passage show us about the cost of living out our calling?

How might we respond when God's call takes us into conflict or misunderstanding?

Summing up

In these three conversations, Jesus defines his calling: resisting false paths, inviting followers into discovery, and proclaiming God's liberating mission. His words and silences shape a pattern for our own discipleship — grounded in Scripture, open to others, and faithful even when costly. As we begin our Lenten journey, we too are called to listen for the Father's voice amid other competing ones, and to walk the way that leads to life.

Think about later

Find a few quiet minutes this week - your own 'wilderness moment.'

Ask yourself: What am I truly seeking?

Listen for the still, small voice that calls you to 'come and see.'

A closing prayer

Lord Jesus,
you met temptation with truth,
called seekers with gentleness,
and spoke courageously of your mission.
As we follow you through this season of Lent,
help us to listen, to trust, and to walk faithfully
wherever you lead.

Amen.

