



FEBRUARY 22, 2026

SUNDAY SERMON

GOING THROUGH A TIME OF TESTING

Dear Friends,

This morning, we begin the season of Lent—a forty-day time of reflection, self-examination, and repentance as we prepare for Easter.

Our passage focuses on Jesus' preparation in the wilderness. Led by the Spirit, He is tested—not to harm Him, but to strengthen Him. The Greek word used here means both tempt and test. While we often dislike tests, there are things we can only learn through them. Strength, courage and wisdom are rarely formed in comfort.

First, times of testing teach us what is worth sacrificing for. Jesus refused the easy solution offered by the Tempter and chose obedience, suffering, and sacrifice. Why? Because He loved the Father and loved us. Love gave Him strength. In the same way, we willingly endure hardship for people or purposes we truly love.

Second, testing reveals who we really are. The devil challenges Jesus by saying, "If you are the Son of God," attacking His identity. Our choices flow from who we believe we are. When our identity is rooted in God's truth—that we are made in His image and called His children—we are better able to endure testing without giving up.

Finally, testing reveals our true purpose. Jesus responds to the final temptation by saying, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only." That is our purpose: to worship God and serve Him by putting His love into action. When we do, others see God at work in us.

This Lent, may God help us see what is worth sacrificing for, remind us who we truly are in Christ, and deepen our understanding of our purpose—to love, worship, and serve Him with our whole lives.

Amen

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 4:1-11 (NIV)

4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

"'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.