

A NOTE TO PARENTS

Lent began as a fast in preparation for Easter—a time to focus the hearts and minds of the faithful, so that at the moment of celebrating Jesus' victory over death, they would be free from daily concerns and from jealousy, anger, appetite and greed. It was a natural next step to connect this great fast with Jesus' own fast of forty days in preparation for his ministry. But by that connection, the Church introduced the theme of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, which subtly changes the subject of this preparatory time. Rather than "Prepare to celebrate Jesus' victory in your life," Lenten devotion in the West has warned us instead to "Prepare to meet the Tempter in your own desert." Our unconscious image for the Lenten season is that of the soul alone in combat with Satan, as Jesus was ... rather than the People of God together, joyfully clearing the decks and cleansing their hearts, in order to receive the King as he returns to us in triumph from his last and most desperate battle.

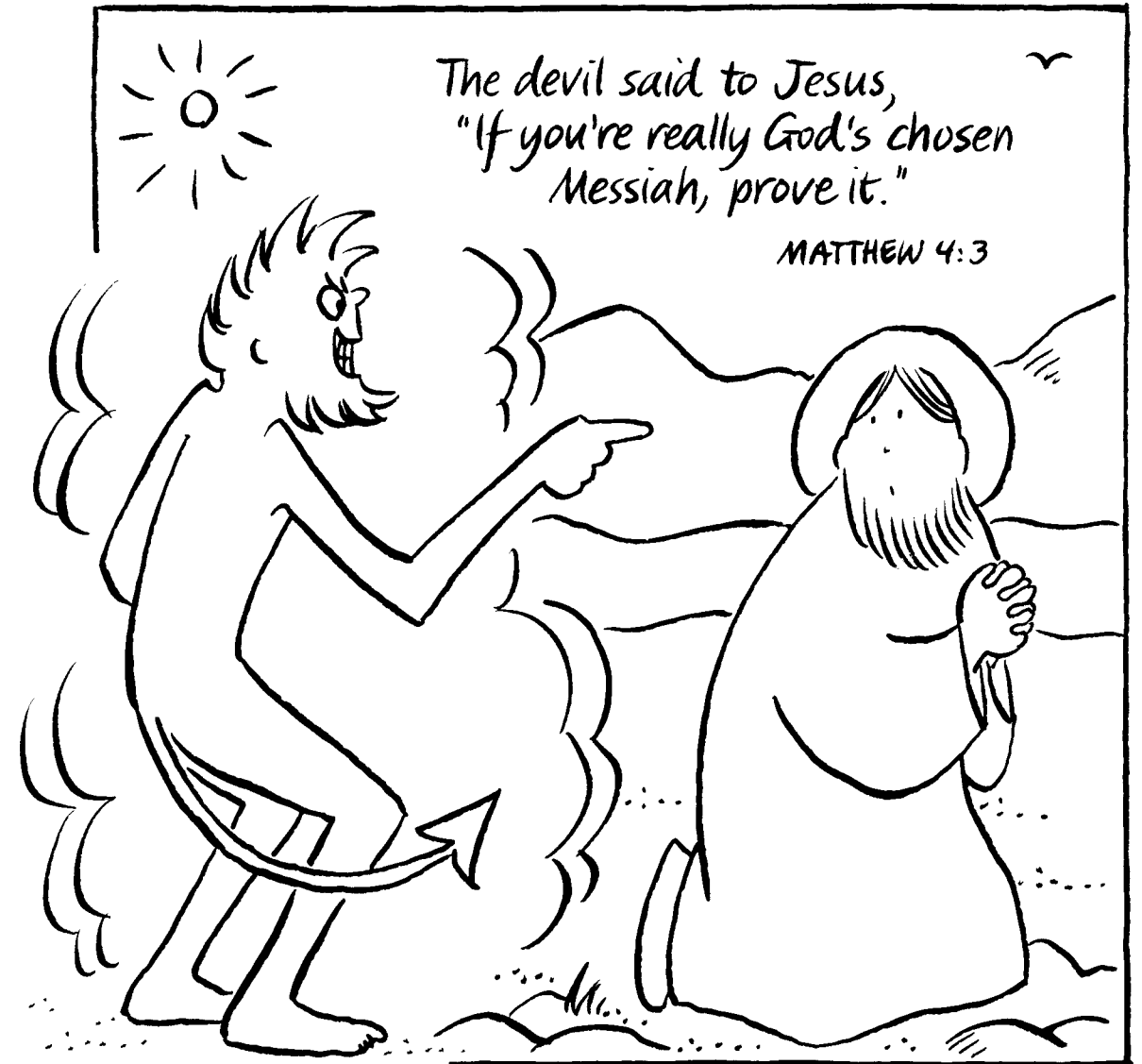
So as we talk with our children about today's Gospel, it is well not have it set the tone for the whole of our Lenten season. In the weeks to come, we will see Jesus in the Gospel of John, as *light in the darkness, water in the desert, new life for the dead*. Jesus was "in every way tempted as we are;" yet his temptations were tailored to his particular vulnerabilities, even as ours are directed at ours. We do not need to go into great detail with children about the three offers that Satan made to Jesus, and his Scriptural replies. Children find them abstract and hard to understand. Instead, our message is that *Jesus had to choose, just as we do*. Even the anointed Son of God was free to turn away from God, just as Adam and Eve were before him. Enslaved as we are to sin, we are nevertheless free at each particular moment, to choose life or death. The more we teach ourselves to be alert and awake, the more we can claim this freedom—the less we will turn away from God simply out of inherited habit. And so we are back to the idea of Lent as a time of cleansing and preparation, a time to build the habits of alertness and conscious choice that will make us able to stand in joy around the table at Easter.

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Year A
1st SUNDAY
in LENT



AFTER HIS BAPTISM, JESUS WENT OUT TO THE DESERT.

Jesus ate nothing for forty days. He prayed, and listened for God's voice.



The devil said to him, "If you're the Messiah, let's see you turn these rocks into bread."



"Or how about jumping off the Temple? If you're the Messiah, angels will catch you."

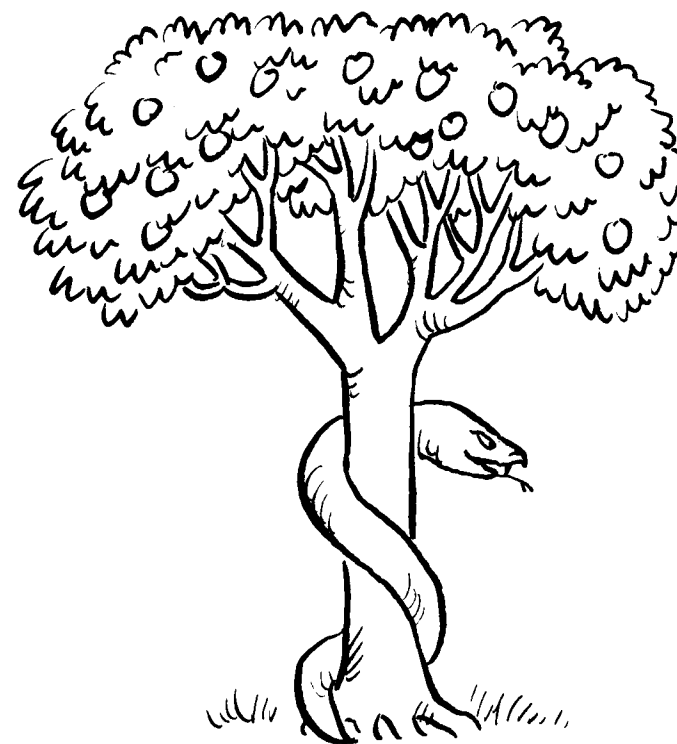


"Or listen! I'll give you the whole world, if you'll just worship me!" But Jesus said, "Go away."



This is the season of LENT, when we remember how Jesus had to decide what God wanted him to do. Satan, the Evil One, tried to get Jesus to do things his way instead of God's way. But Jesus did not listen. He obeyed God, even when it was harder.

The Bible says that in the beginning, people disobeyed God. So now we need Jesus to save us.



Draw Adam and Eve at the tree. What does the snake want?