

Sunday 28 February 2021

Today is the second Sunday of Lent. Last week we had a special service to observe Church Action on Poverty Sunday, and today we are watching an ecumenical video service prepared as part of Fairtrade Fortnight so we have not focussed much on Lent yet, nor read the Gospel of the temptation of Christ. The Fairtrade service video is quite short, so before we watch that, I'd like to read three poems by Malcolm Guite on the temptations of Christ, and close with a blessing for Lent.

Stones into Bread

The Fountain thirsts, the Bread is hungry here
The Light is dark, the Word without a voice.
When darkness speaks it seems so light and clear.
Now He must dare, with us, to make a choice.
In a distended belly's cruel curve
He feels the famine of the ones who lose
He starves for those whom we have forced to starve
He chooses now for those who cannot choose.
He is the staff and sustenance of life
He lives for all from one Sustaining Word
His love still breaks and pierces like a knife
The stony ground of hearts that never shared,
God gives through Him what Satan never could;
The broken bread that is our only food.

All the kingdoms of the World

'So here's the deal and this is what you get:
The penthouse suite with world-commanding views,
The banker's bonus and the private jet
Control and ownership of all the news
An 'in' to that exclusive one percent,
Who know the score, who really run the show
With interest on every penny lent
And sweeteners for cronies in the know.
A straight arrangement between me and you
No hell below or heaven high above
You just admit it, and give me my due
And wake up from this foolish dream of love...'
But Jesus laughed, 'You are not what you seem.
Love is the waking life, you are the dream.'

On the pinnacle

'Temples and Spires are good for looking down from;
You stand above the world on holy heights,
Here on the pinnacle, above the maelstrom,
Among the few, the true, unearthly lights.
Here you can breathe the thin air of perfection
And feel your kinship with the lonely star,
Above the shadow and the pale reflection,
Here you can know for certain who you are.
The world is stalled below, but you could move it
If they could know you as you are up here,
Of course they'll doubt, but here's your chance to prove it
Angels will bear you up, so have no fear....'
'I was not sent to look down from above
It's fear that sets these tests and proofs, not Love.'

Blessing

This is the wilderness time,
when every path is obscure
and thorns have grown around the words of hope.
Be the wings of our strength, O God,
in this time of wilderness waiting.

This is the time of stone, not bread,
when even the sunrise feels uncertain
and everything tastes of bitterness.
Be the wings of our strength, O God,
in this time of wilderness waiting.

This is the time of ashes and dust,
when darkness clothes our dreams
and no star shines a guiding light.
Be the wings of our strength, O God,
in this time of wilderness waiting.

This is the time of treading life,
waiting for the swells to subside
and for the chaos to clear.