

Interactive lesson



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/mother-educating-baby-to-walk-7491088/>

What is this child doing? <Let them respond>

Can anyone else learn to walk for this child?

<Let them respond>

What happens if they fall down? <Let them respond>

Would you consider this child an athlete?

<Let them respond>

What might it take for this child to get there?

<Let them respond>

What are we doing, when we attend church?

<Let them respond>

Can anyone else do that for us? <Let them respond>

What happens if we sin? <Let them respond>

Would you call those of us here today apostles?

<Let them respond>

What might it take for us to get there?

<Let them respond>

It takes learning many different muscle movements and control for a toddler to be able to walk. It takes many more stages of learning muscle movements and control with focus and practice as a person grows to hone themselves for athletic activities.

Similarly, it takes us learning many different ways of relating to and loving God to grow in our faith. Over time, with focus and practice, we can hone those ways to serve God in the manner to which we are called. Let us strive for better focus and practice, that we may ever grow closer to our Lord.

Gospel lesson

The season of Lent is a time during which we strive to reject temptations to sin, dedicating ourselves to God in preparation for Easter. Listen now to how Jesus prepared for His ministry and rejected temptations after His baptism.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-jesus-tested/>

Luke 4:1-13

(NRSV)

¹ Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness,

² 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.

³ The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread."

⁴ Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not

live by bread alone.'"

⁵ Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.

⁶ And the devil 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.

⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

⁸ Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

⁹ Then the devil 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,

¹⁰for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,'

¹¹and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

¹²Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

¹³When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn “Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley” TFWS
#2112>

Message: An Opportune Time



pictures from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/gathered-up-in-jesus>

Please pray with me?

Patient Savior, as we take time now to further consider today’s scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may be gathered closer to You at every opportunity. Amen.



picture from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/gathered-up-in-jesus/first-sunday-in-lent-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/first-sunday-in-lent-year-c-graphics>

We begin the Lenten series, “Gathered Up in Jesus,” today with “An Opportune Time.”

“This week, worship needs to be seen as a second beginning...[our] entry into the season of Lent. It is a time to issue a call to deeper living, to repentance, but with the grace of a loving Christ wreathed around us.”



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/person-driving-car-3767206/>

It can be scary, learning to drive. Suddenly you are expected to control [over a ton of powered metal and synthetics], without harming anything, natural life near you or manufactured objects, all with other metallic tons zipping by. But unless you actually do it, you will never learn how to drive safely.

Even scarier can be teaching someone how to drive. Knowing how hazardous it can be, you give up your control to someone with little or no experience, usually someone more precious to you than yourself.

You try to prepare them, explaining as much as you can, demonstrating it, and then coaching them once they are behind the wheel. You know they are bound to make mistakes, and you pray that you will be able to warn them before anything tragic happens, because you know that you cannot take control and do the driving for them if they are to learn.

I think in giving us self-awareness, our Creator understands that we need to learn how to live, how to interact with one another and how to interact with God through the acts of doing it. So God gave up control over our choices, allowing us to learn.

- † God explained to us what to do: Deuteronomy is full of laws about how to live and worship the Lord.
- † God demonstrated to us what we should do, coming to earth as Jesus (fully human and fully divine).
- † And God coaches us even now as we try to live well, moving as the Holy Spirit in our lives.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-jesus-tested/>

Jesus went through some clear extremes to make His points about living and the choices we make. Take today's Gospel reading:

- † After forty days of fasting, bread probably sounded delicious! But it is not healthy for a person to dig into grainy bread immediately after a long fast. So when Jesus refused to turn the stone to bread, He was demonstrating care for self as well as desire for God.
- † Glory and authority over all the kingdoms of the world meant being set up as greater than others, demeaning them relative to one's self. When Jesus refused to worship the devil, He was demonstrating love for all people as well as obedience to God.
- † Expecting God to save us when we deliberately get into trouble is treating God as a cosmic butler, as

though we were Master over Him. Although today's psalm describes how God will protect His child, to save us from the consequences of [actions we already know are reckless] does not teach us anything. When Jesus refused to put God to the test, He was demonstrating appropriate fealty to God; i.e., our place relative to our Creator.

Those concepts are reflected in the epistle lesson.

- † We turn to Jesus so that we as individuals can be saved.
- † There is no elevating some people over others.
- † God is generous to all of us who turn to God as our Lord.

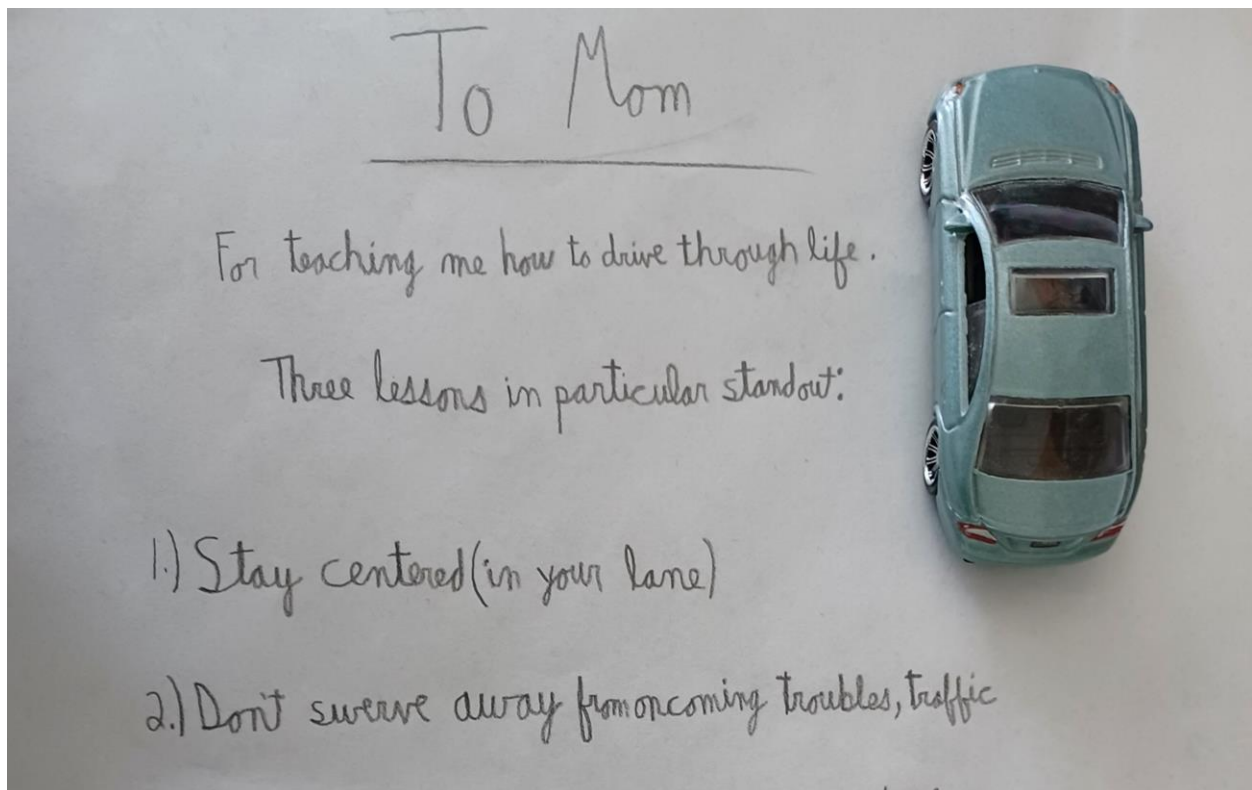
I think a similar caveat to that about angels protecting Jesus applies to "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Paul's premise is that those calling on the Lord have the Word of God - that is, Jesus - in their hearts.

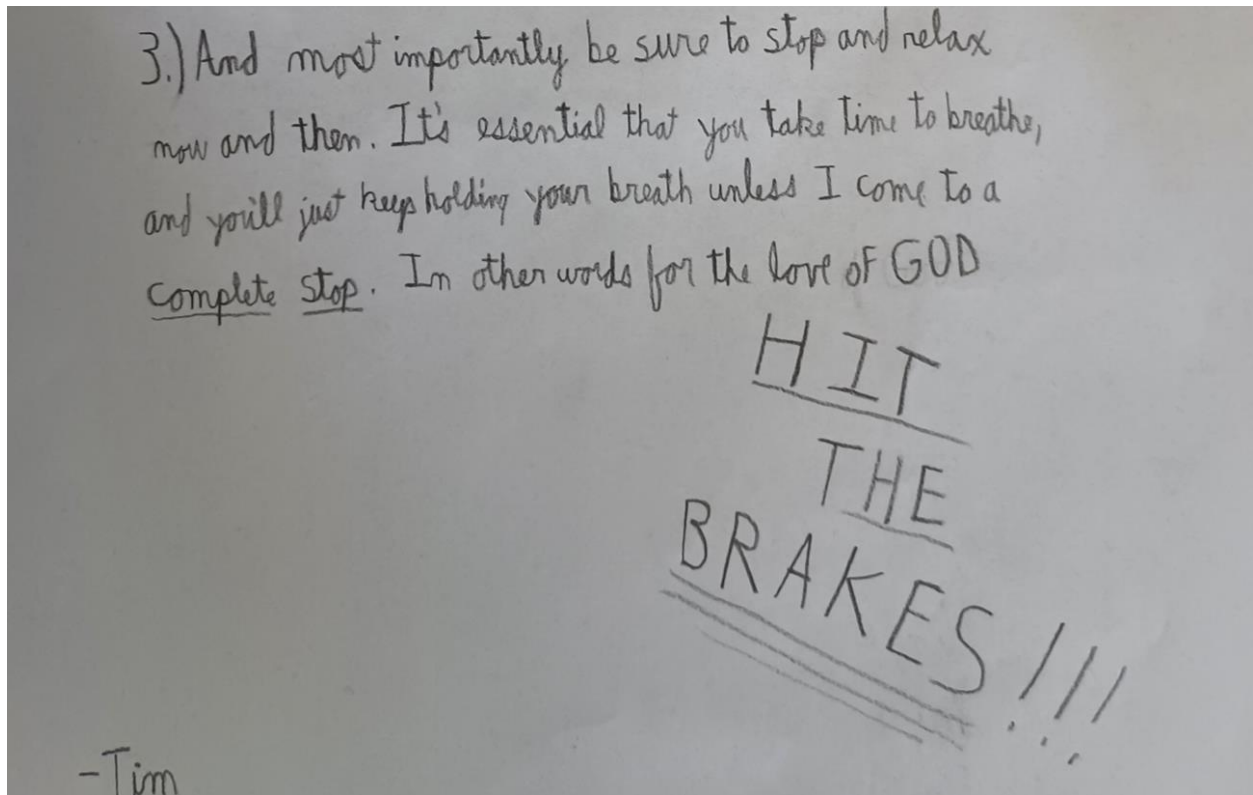
After the devil finished the tests with Jesus, he left until an opportune time. I read that "opportune time" as one in which Jesus can demonstrate further how we should live, for us to learn more lessons.

It being Lent, it seems like an opportune time to open our hearts to the lessons God would teach us. We

might even find that eventually we appreciate how God forces us to face situations that we do not like.

When I was teaching my son Timothy to drive, he did not like big semi-trucks barreling down the road toward him in the opposite lane. Even with the trucks staying in their lane, he had a tendency to swerve away from them that we had to work on; I coached him to stay centered in his lane. After he had his driver's license, he thanked me for my troubles with a matchbox car and a note:





Reapplying this to our temptations:

1. Stay centered on Jesus - we know He is the Way.
2. Don't swerve from oncoming troubles - avoiding them can get you into something much worse!
3. Be sure to stop and rest in the Lord. Hit the brakes on your normal routine, completely focus on the Holy Spirit, and breathe - you may crash if you do not!

And so, I invite you, in the name of the Church, to observe a holy Lent: by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word.

<Doxology>

<Offertory / Pastoral Prayer>

Let us pray:

Mighty God, as we remember the strength of Jesus facing the temptation offered by the devil, we remember too clearly how the temptations of food, of authority, and power have overcome us.

We've been tricked to believe our wants were needs and more is always better.

May we offer our gifts to you this day with generosity and gratitude;

strengthen us to resist temptation that would present security or power in anyone but you.

- Lord, please help {these members of the body of Christ whom we lift up} with Your healing touch and comfort:

- -
- -
- -
- -
- -
- -
- -
- -

- Thanks for

- -
- -

- Hold those who cannot be with us in Your loving embrace until we see them again.

- Family far off
- Travelers
- Send Your Spirit to address world/social problems
 - end bigotry, dismantle racism, reform systems persist
 - bring world peace
- Guide our Leaders – local, state, federal, international, and especially of Your church.

All these things we pray in Your holy name, Amen.

<THE GREAT THANKSGIVING Communion – UNCOVER elements>

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth.

- † You brought all things into being and called them good.
- † From the dust of the earth you formed us into your image and breathed into us the breath of life.
- † When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast.
- † When rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights, you bore up the ark on the waters,

saved Noah and his family, and made covenant with every living creature on earth.

- † When you led your people to Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights, you gave us your commandments and made us your covenant people.
- † When your people forsook your covenant, your prophet Elijah fasted for forty days and forty nights; and on your holy mountain, he heard your still small voice.

<slide change>

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.

- † When you gave him to save us from our sin, your Spirit led him into the wilderness, where he fasted forty days and forty nights to prepare for his ministry.
- † When he suffered and died on a cross for our sin, you raised him to life, presented him alive to the apostles during forty days, and exalted him at your right hand.

By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

Now, when we your people prepare for the yearly feast of Easter, you lead us to repentance for sin and the cleansing of our hearts, that during these forty days of Lent we may be gifted and graced to reaffirm the covenant you made with us through Christ.

<hold hands out over bread/elements>

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:
“Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

<hold hands out over juice/elements>

When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:
“Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,

<slide change>

we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving
as a holy and living sacrifice,
in union with Christ's offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.
Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

<hold hands out over elements>

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on
on these gifts of bread and juice.
Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,
that we may be for the world the body of Christ,
redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each
other, and one in ministry to all the world, until
Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his
heavenly banquet.

Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit
in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours,
almighty God, now and forever.

Amen.

And now, with the confidence of the children of God,
let us pray: *<Lord's Prayer>*

<Breaking of the bread and lifting of the cup>

<Serving of the elements;

concurrent hymn "Just As I Am" UMH #357>

<COVER remaining elements>

<Hymn “Take Time to Be Holy” UMH #395>

<Benediction>



background picture from
<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/gathered-up-in-jesus/first-sunday-in-lent-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/first-sunday-in-lent-year-c-graphics>

Go now in peace,
taking advantage of this opportune time
to observe a Holy Lent.
Stay focused on our Holy Lord,
growing in faith and discipleship
until we are all gathered up in Jesus.
Amen.