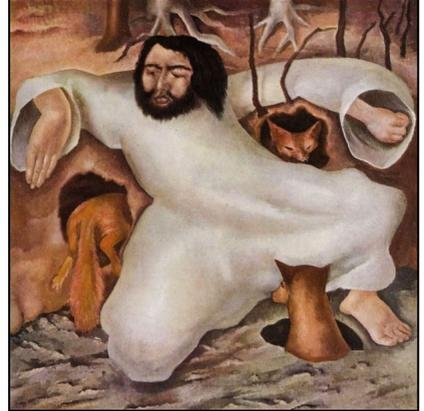


Day 6

The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was tempted in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him. 1.12-13

Why did God's Spirit drive his Son into the wilderness?

Stanley Spencer's painting graphically illustrates the challenges Jesus faced in the wilderness. His tongue is swollen with thirst. His hair is unkempt. His hands in their gaping sleeves mirror the foxes in their holes, an allusion to Jesus' hard call to would-be disciples (see Matt 8.20). The ministering angels have not yet arrived. There are allusions to the cross (the outstretched arms), and the laying out of Jesus' dead body (Jesus' bent right leg is far too big, resembling a rock, which his torso – visible under the white robe – lies across to the right). Jesus will face a greater temptation (Mark 14.32-42).



This is a stark reminder that from the outset Jesus was in a battle - with Satan, suffering and death (cf. Luke 4.13). Taking on the world's sin meant taking on its suffering too.

We are also reminded of Jesus' full humanity: life was no easier for him than for us. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus was tempted in every respect as we are, yet did not sin (Heb 4.15).

Extraordinarily, the Holy Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness because "although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him" (Heb 5.8-9).

The Father was faithful in delivering the Son from temptation. He won't allow us to be tempted beyond what we can cope with either (see 1 Cor 10.13).

? How has testing and overcoming temptation taught you obedience?

 Heavenly Father, you discipline your children whom you love. Help me to accept your discipline when you apply it, to learn obedience through it, and to be delivered me from it, for your name's sake. Amen.