Deuteronomy 26:1-11 and Luke 4: 1-13. What is our offering and for what promise?

Last week we looked at the glory of God. The ministry of how to bring the splendour and bliss of heaven to earth had changed from the time of Moses to the new covenant in Jesus.

God’s glory is consistent and constant – that has not changed, but the ministry in which it is brought to heaven has been made permanent and perfect through Jesus.

In the first reading from Deuteronomy the Israelite’s are being told how to offer their first fruits as thanksgiving for the land that God had given to them.

Not sure about anyone else here, but I do not grow very much at all. I know that some have gardening skills, vegetable patches or allotments. But where would you take your first harvest to? We do not have a priest in this building, and we do not have any one place or building where God has chosen as a dwelling for His Name.

Perhaps when we have harvest festival, that covers this requirement. Box ticked?!

But the Israelite’s were told to do this as thanksgiving for the land that had been given to them as a nation – their inheritance. Well, that is no longer relevant to me. So does this mean that the whole of the requirement is no longer relevant?

Or, rather like living in the Spirit of the law rather than the letters (as per what was given to Moses that was fulfilled by Jesus) we also need to look at the spirit of thanksgiving rather than the law surrounding it.

Our harvest may not be crops or fruit, so we all need to consider what our harvest is in our life today. What has God given us in order to sustain and provide for our needs.

What is God’s inheritance to us? Life in His presence. When Jesus came to earth He did so for our sake. When Jesus took His last breath on the cross the temple curtain was split completely in two, signifying that God no longer had any barrier between Him and creation, and creation has no barrier to God. Jesus became the only high priest that intercedes for us to our Father. The Holy Spirit has been imparted to all who accept Jesus as God’s Son. Not just by word, but truly accepted Him into their very being.

As such, our offering should not just be our first few tomatoes, but our whole life. Not just what we have, but all that we are.

But we know that our offering of praise and thanksgiving can be difficult in certain circumstances – life equivalent of drought or flood. But Jesus has shown us the way – because He chose to put himself into our position as fully human, weak and subject to the way of the world.

In Luke 4: 1-13 we read about the temptations that Jesus faced just after His baptism. He was led into a desert place. There was no provision for His physical needs in that place, He was hungry, thirsty, tired, hot, cold, alone – whatever we would have felt. He may have been so weak that these encounters with satan may have been in His mind – although not physical no less powerful or real.

It was in that place of weakness that satan tempted Him. He begins “if you are the Son of God” – well, that was unnecessary, as the Holy Spirit had come upon Him in the form of a dove and the voice from heaven had confirmed that “You are my Son”. Who did we think was speaking?

“If you are the Son of God” – already confirmed! “Tell this stone to become bread”. Like that thought would not have entered Jesus’ mind!

Jesus quoted scripture back “It is written: “Men and women do not live on bread alone”.

The devil leads him to a high place and tempts Jesus again. “I will give you all the authority of every kingdom on earth …… but only if you worship me”. You could say that satan was lying, all kingdoms belong to God, don’t they? But until heaven comes fully and completely to earth, satan has been given power over earth.

Jesus quotes scripture again: “It is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only”.

For the third temptation, satan leads Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem and then quotes scripture to Him. “Throw yourself down for it is written “He will command His angels concerning you”.

Jesus answered “It says: “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”

We have a few truths that appear in the account of the temptations. Firstly, satan quotes scripture. He knew it well. Just knowing the word of God does not make us Godly people. Likewise, we see in the bible that satan and his minions know Jesus, full well, but that does not make them Christians. It is the same for us. Just knowing scripture is not what makes us Christ followers – it is taking the words and allowing them to soak into our very being. When I refer to it being “of the heart” what I mean is that it is of our whole being, central to our whole life.

The way that Jesus answers re-iterates that He is willing to identify himself purely as human, in our weakness of self, but strength in the trust of God and His promises. Everything that satan tempted Jesus with, could have been brought about. Jesus IS the Son of God and all that was written in the past was true. But Jesus CHOSE to answer by quoting the laws that had been written for men and women to adhere to, to show their faith in God.

It also shows that Jesus had not come to ignore the OT laws and that they were no longer relevant. They were relevant to Jesus so they must be relevant to us. We may have to re-evaluate the purpose behind them – such as offering the first fruits of harvest – so that we can adhere to God’s desire for His creation.

We should offer our praise, worship and whole being to God, at all times as we are always in His presence; because He showed His love for us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, for our sake, so that He can have a personal relationship with each one of us. That is our inheritance.

Jesus sets an example for us, that even in human form we can disarm satan of any power, but quoting the truth we find in Christ.

We must have belief in the power of God. Jesus did. We may have to experience hardship and suffering – Jesus did also. We may feel weak and helpless, not beyond rejection and even death – so was Jesus.

But we, just like Jesus, must put our trust in God and look to His kingdom of righteousness, that is within us now, and will come fully to earth in His time. That is, and will be, our inheritance.