

Luke 4: 1-13

**Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit,
returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,
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.**

The devil said to him:

“If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.”

Jesus answered him, “It is written, “One does not live by bread alone”

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

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.**

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

Jesus answered him:

“It is written,

Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”

**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,
for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you.’ and ‘On their
hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’”**

Jesus answered him:

“It is said, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”

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

Meditation:

**Did you happen to catch the beginning of today's reading?
I think the beginning is often overshadowed
by the three temptations that the devil, according to Luke,
puts to Jesus.**

The opening lines of today's reading are:

**Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit,
returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,
where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.**

Oh My!

**The Jordan is where Jesus was just baptized and
where the voice from heaven boomed:
“You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”**

**Each one of these temptations are situations where Jesus'
identity as God's Son, the Beloved,
could be used as a special perk or privilege...**

**Each one of these situations will offer Jesus a choice:
He could use his status and identity to protect himself from harm and suffering
He could use his status help him gain special privileges and power...**

or...

He would choose to trust that God always 'has his back' so to speak, even if the situation doesn't look so good.

The first temptation actually doesn't seem like a temptation at all!

God wouldn't let his beloved Son starve.... would he?

Of course God would feed Jesus...what's wrong with that?

Well...what is wrong is that the devil is trying to force God's hand.

And...to be honest...I think we have all tried to do it.

Jesus' main mission wasn't providing food for the hungry...

although he did that at times.

His main mission was to change the hearts of those who those who had money, of those who had food, so that they could feed the hungry.

So by replying that "One does not live by bread alone"

Jesus acknowledges the necessity of a well fed spiritual life

leading towards the transformation and evolution of our spiritual consciousness

even as he acknowledged the necessity of a well fed physical life.

The second temptation was all about power.

The devil offers worldly power if Jesus would worship him.

The devil has two names in scripture.

One is Satan: which means accuser and

the other is diabolus translated as The Devil.

Diabolus means the one who tears things apart, the divider.

The kingdoms of this world who are under Satan's rule are those kingdoms which accuse and divide, those leaders who are under the rule of Diabolus

pit one group of people against the other...

they demonize one group of people

and project all of the countries problems on particular groups of people so that they become persecuted and marginalized.

If Jesus would be willing to follow this path to power: one of accusation and dividing people against each other...

then the Devil would give him the power he needs for what he desires to do. It's the old question:

“Does the end justify the means?”

Jesus rejects Satan's offer and chooses a much different path to power: one of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Jesus chooses a path that brings people together rather than pushing them farther apart and he chooses a path which refrains from accusations and a path which offers forgiveness and compassion instead.

The third temptation is attempting to put God to the test.

God would not let his Son die...would he?

Of course, if Jesus would throw himself off the temple parapet

God would let his angels save him...see it's right there in Scripture!

But Jesus resists this challenge as well...but it won't be for the last time.

When Jesus hangs on the cross the bystanders in the Gospel of Mark also hope for Divine intervention...

but we all know that it doesn't come...

Jesus does die on the cross....

he did not put God to the test the first or the second time.

So...What are we to learn?

These temptations, as we have already noted, happened after God's public affirmation of Jesus as his Son, his Beloved.

Would that perhaps be a clue why some of us don't really want to be noticed by God? Why we choose to play it 'small'?

AAAA.....no thank you, God!

**I'm quite happy to let someone else be your beloved,
b/c I'm not strong enough or brave enough or smart enough
to resist the temptation!**

**I mean really...if God let's God's own Son endure these trials...well...
I think I'd rather fly under the radar.
Perhaps I can avoid trouble by just being good and not making waves...
staying small and avoid being noticed.**

But does that ever happen?

Does any human being ever avoid troubles?

**Does any one person ever get through life without having to
make choices about what is life giving and what is not?**

**Haven't we all caught up in situations where we are asked to choose
between ego centered power or other centered power?**

**Don't we all find ourselves as sometime or another hungry for something?
Be it bread or love or belonging or meaning?**

Do we find ourselves waiting for God to feed us?

Expecting, bargaining, demanding God to save us?

Life is full of tests or choices, you can choose what to call them.

We can't avoid them...

**Every moment of our lives we can choose to proceed with love
for ourselves and others...**

or we can choose to better ourselves at the expense of others.

**We can choose to use power to bring people together,
or we can choose to use power to divide people apart....**

**We can choose the way of division and accusation,
the way of narcissism and condemnation..**

**or we can choose the way of inclusion, compassion,
generosity, forgiveness and love.**

**The life of Jesus shows us that bad things sometimes happen to good people,
but the faith of Jesus shows us that God's power can transform
any 'bad' thing into New Life...**

That is the faith we hold, the faith we profess.

It is the faith we ponder during Lent and the faith we celebrate on Easter...

**So let us take a bit of time this Lenten season to ponder and reflect upon
why and how we make the choices that we make...**

**Do we take the path of not trusting in the Love of God,
the path of division and self centered power?**

or do we take the path of Love?

Do you know what your answer is?

amen.

