

Coop's Scoops # 166, Sunday Sermon and prayers Lent One 2021

LENT ONE: The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus

Sentence: We shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4)



Readings: Genesis 9: 8-17 Ps 25: 1-10 1 Peter 3: 18-22

The Collect:

Almighty God, show Son fasted forty days in the wilderness, and was tempted as we are but did not sin, give us grace to disciple ourselves in submission to your Spirit that as you know our weakness, so we may know your power to save; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Holy Gospel:

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved;^[a] with you I am well pleased."

¹² And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news^[b] of God,^[c] ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;^[d] repent, and believe in the good news.

The Sermon:

We begin a Lenten journey this morning that takes us from Ash Wednesday through Good Friday and on to Resurrection morning. We begin with sober self-examination which assures us that without God we are lost. We continue with the study of the Scriptures that assure us that God is with us no matter what. And we finish with the joyful realization that, because of Jesus, we too will be with God no matter what. Not even death can separate us from Him. Jesus also took a Lenten-type journey, although He would not have called it that. His Ash Wednesday occurred in the wilderness, His living out of God's Word comprised

His ministry, and His final joy was the vindication of resurrection, and His ascension to His Father. He is our pattern in all things.

Jesus began, as do we, with **wondering**; puzzling over just precisely what His Father wanted Him to do in this world. He was attracted to the words and ministry of John, who was calling for radical change and commitment to holiness of life. Then Jesus made the decision to literally **take the plunge**. He was baptized.



The Holy Spirit affirmed Him and blessed Him with the promise of the Father's love and approval. Then, quite immediately Mark tells us, He was sent, literally **cast off** into the desert. Expecting to step out in ministry, Jesus sat down to struggle, knelt down to pray. Yet He was not alone. Angels ministered to Him as He struggled. He was, as do we, **experiencing testing**, temptation, and fine sounding rationalizations. We need to understand that when His temptation was completed, then and only then was Jesus ready for His first day on the job. **Struggle always precedes ministry. Testing always precedes strengthening. Suffering is part of victory. And it is all essential to the development of compassion – God-like love for other strugglers on the journey. (Repeat)**

The temptations of Jesus were the common temptations that all of us face: 1/ The temptation to use power for the wrong purposes 2/ the temptation to gain popularity through performance and 3/ the temptation to idolatry...putting anything or anybody between ourselves and God. Do those sound **familiar** to you? If not, perhaps these stories will help.

Nancy went happily to meet with her boss one afternoon. He was smiling and she knew the news would be good. He told her that she was an exceptional employee and that he had chosen her for an exciting promotion as a regional training representative. Nancy squirmed a bit in her chair, and took a deep breath and said "Thank you, I am so pleased you have confidence in me. But I'm already away from my family more days a month than I like. My sons sometimes ask me for identification at the door! The boss frowned deeply and reminded her that she was being given an excellent opportunity, that her salary would double, that she'd be able to do so much more for her family – maybe a new house, better schools, great clothes and a healthy education fund. "You want the best for them, don't you?", he asked Nancy. Had Jesus been there, He may have **answered "Man does not live by bread alone"**.

Commented [JC1]:

Story two; A group of really concerned Christians from all over the city gathered to hear an important politician who shared their beliefs. “Listen”, he said, “We have to take this city back for God. Pornography, illegal drugs, the breakdown of the family – it’s all undermining our moral fiber. We can’t just stand around and do nothing. It’s time we get tough. Stricter law enforcement, longer prison sentences, capital punishment again. This city needs to promote righteousness. Prayer and Bible reading should be part of every public school room. It’s time for church leaders and politicians to team up to make our city Christian again. **The group burst into applause.** But one man spoke up. “ I agreed with a lot that you said”, he began, but I still have some **questions.** You talked a lot about getting tough on crime, but not about getting tender with the needy. What about homelessness and hunger and poverty that breeds crime? And I’m not so sure the churches should depend on the government to promote faith. Righteousness is not something that can be imposed, it is something that God inspires. It comes from a new heart, not a new law.” “Look, sir,” the politician said, “What the churches can’t do by persuasion, we can do with legislation. What you can’t do with a gentle word, we can do with the power to prosecute. I think it would be smart for your people to team up with **people in high places**”. Had Jesus been there, He may have said **“Worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him.”**

Then, in story three, there was the church which had been one of the largest in the province. But for the past 20 years, it had been in a decline. Factories had closed and people moved elsewhere to find jobs. Something had to be done. They found a fellow from the **Growing Churches Advertising Incorporated** group. He made a powerful presentation. “ If your church wants to soar with eagles instead of waddling with ducks, you have to try things no one else has ever done. You have to set yourselves apart, get noticed...grab the public’s attention. In one of our churches, we helped them sponsor an annual Christian body builders contest. They promote themselves as the hard body church: the healthiest congregation in town. The Sunday before the contest, the minister preaches with his shirt off”. **Personal note: Won’t be happening here!** A few of the people’s mouths dropped open. One of the parishioners said “ I recall Jesus saying that the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, or like yeast in bread dough. It grows less conspicuously”. The consultant just laughed. “That was a long time ago. Things have changed. You have to face up to the competition. My motto is **“Whatever it takes”**. I propose you start a group called “Bungee Jumpers for Jesus”. I even have a great motto for you: “We have a faith

that always bounces back”. What do you think?” Had Jesus been there, He may have said **“Do not put the Lord your God to the test”**.

Temptations always seem to be reasonable. The devil didn’t tempt Jesus to go out and kill someone. He was subtle, persuasive, seemingly interested only in Jesus own well-being. No wonder he is known as the Father of Lies. Jesus, who is the TRUTH, spoke the truth and triumphed.

And so we ask ourselves this morning: What temptations do we have as a church family? What temptations do we face personally? And how do we deal with them? Always and ever and only through the Word of our God who always, always and always keeps His promise. Remember the rainbow. God does. We are strong and sure and safe in His care. We are sheltered in His love. Such promises are like the angels, ministering to us in our own wilderness.

In this pandemic time, when things are not “safe”, and peril seems just around every corner, we may be tempted to despair. Some of us are despairing right now. How we need those promises of God right up at the front of our minds and pulsing with our heartbeats so that we can be hopeful no matter what. Together we can bear the suffering in our lives, because of the joy to come that God has promised us. (Steve Bell, again). Thanks be to our God who is with us on the journey. Amen.

Prayer:

Holy God: in this season of Lenten fasting, we remember Christ
Who went out into the desert to fast and undergo temptation.

We confess that we are often distracted by material comforts
And tempted to value them above the Kingdom of God.

You, God, are our help in difficulty;

Christ is our inspiration.

We confess that we do not live by bread or worldly provision alone,
But by every word that comes from Your mouth.

May we fill our mouths, our hearts, our minds now with your words
That we might be transformed and renewed.

May we, with renewed hearts and minds,

Better serve the purposes of Your kingdom.

May we, by setting aside worldly distractions

Become more like Christ.

May we, with purified motives and deeper understanding,

Receive Christ when He comes to us.

Lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil.

Amen

(litanies by Francis Pratt)

Blessing:

May the God of infinite grace and mercy forgive you, transform you, and fill you with hope, and may the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you this day and evermore. Amen.

Judie+

1 Forty days and forty nights
You were fasting in the wild;
Forty days and forty nights
Tempted, and yet undefiled.

2 Shall not we Your sorrow share
And from worldly joys abstain,
Fasting with unceasing prayer,
Strong with You to suffer pain?

3 Then, if Satan on us press,
Flesh or spirit to assail,
Victor in the wilderness,
Grant we may not faint nor fail!

4 So shall we have peace divine;
Holier gladness ours shall be.
'Round us, too, shall angels shine,
Such as served You faithfully.

5 Keep, O keep us, Savior dear,
Ever constant by Your side,
That with You we may appear
At the eternal Eastertide.