

sermon title: Temptation Luke 4:1

Our Ash Wednesday service last week was wonderful. Christians who received the mark of the cross in ashes receive a blessing The ashes – a reminder of our mortality, “from Dust we came and unto dust we shall return.” The cross – a reminder of the hope of the resurrection through Christ Jesus. Amen

Ash Wednesday marked the beginning of the season of Lent. During this time we study the sinfulness of our human nature. The season of Lent is a lot like the confession of sins which we do at the beginning of our worship service. We spend a moment of silence to ponder the sins which separate us from God... sins, which required the death of Jesus Christ, for our salvation. During this silent reflection, we reflect upon our personal sins.... the sins we have done against others, the sins against God, the ways we personally break each of the 10 commandments in big ways and in small. we also reflect upon not only sins of action but the sins of inaction. The sin which we do when we leave **UNDONE**, the things we should have done In our confession we confess our weakness against temptation... we confess that we are tempted to sin... and in many ways, “we like our sin.”

What is the source of this temptation? There are basically three sources of temptations. The Devil, the world and our flesh (i.e. ourselves). The first, the Devil, is out there, actively seeking our downfall. He does so by encouraging us to question the word of God, to dismiss his commandments as inconsequential, to distrust the promises of God love and put our believe in futures that do not take into consideration the active presence of God. The second source of temptation, the world tempts us to turn away from putting our trust in God and instead to put our trust in the powers of this world.

The third source of temptation is a far more insidious source. “We have met the enemy... and he is us.” Many times, **WE OURSELVES** are the source of our own temptations. Many times, we ourselves are the reason why we fail to live according to God’s ways. During this time of year, many people give something up for Lent. One of the reasons for doing this is to experience the struggle of the flesh, i.e. to give up one worldly pleasure. One is faced with the realization that if it is this hard to deny one pleasure, if our salvation were dependent on us being able to refuse all pleasures of the flesh, then we would be doomed. It is precisely this weakness, this sinful nature which makes us tempted by the devil and the world. We buy into the lies of the devil because we do not want to put our entire faith in God. In the presence of worldly temptations, we find ourselves,

conforming to the world's ways because they are the things which we can see with our earthly eyes. Our very human nature" seems to conspire against us. When it comes to temptations "The enemy is US."

In fact, the bible is well aware of this. Scripture tells us two important points about our human nature and explains why this is so. 1. The human nature is blind to God. 2. The human nature is separated from God. This is not how mankind was created to be. In the beginning, Man could talk to God. Man lived in harmony with God. Then sin came into this world by the choice of Adam and Eve. As a result, Adam and Eve were cast out from Eden and mankind became separated from God. In time, Mankind became blind to God's ways. And because of our blindness all we could see was this world and us. We were separated from God.

The sad part was that we still had a need for God. In its blindness, Mankind sought to fill that need, with the things of this world. In fact, our need to fill that hollow left by God led us to lust for the world. And in the lust for the things of this world we became enemies of God. For this reason, Scripture tells us, we became worthy of damnation, eternal death in Hell. We were doomed by our human nature. The temptation which drags us away from God, comes from our very human nature.

On our own, we would have been in a very bad situation. However, God desired something else for his people. However, God desired something else for US. Whenever we are faced with a temptation, God will provide a way to deal with the temptation. God will provide the power to deal with it. God will provide an opportunity to escape the temptation. 1Cor10:13

God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

How does God want us to deal with temptation? Sometimes the way will be to simply move away from it. Sometimes the best escape from temptation is to physically remove yourself from the situation. Like in the story of Joseph, when he was tempted by Potiphar's wife, he just ran away from the temptation. If you are being tempted to steal something, simply walk away. if you are being tempted sexually, just walk away, if you are being tempted to take the Lord's name in vain walk away from the situation tempting you to do so. Sometimes it is as simple as removing yourself from the situation.

But sometimes, the temptation cannot be walked away from. Sometimes no matter how hard I try I cannot shake the temptation. In fact, sometimes I kinda like the

temptation. Even though I know it is bad, I flirt with the temptation. In fact, the reason why I cannot easily rid myself of this temptation is that it does not come from the outside. It comes from the inside. It comes from within me. It's almost like inside of us is the desire to self-pride, the desire for an illicit sexual affair, the desire to steal the desire to hurt another the desire to covet things, etc. And these desires actively seek out temptations. These desires actively seek out spiritual failure. And the insidious part of this.... is that when these come from inside of us, we cannot just walk away, Cuz.... they move with us. It is as if our spiritual failure is built in... deep within us, so we can't get rid of it. So, what can we do? What can we do about this? What does God want us to do about this? The answer is "nothing". It is precisely because our failure comes from within, that we cannot save ourselves. For that reason, when we confess our sins. We do not ask for more power against our sins, against our temptations. We are confessing our need for a savior.

The good news is that God has provided that Savior. And now God has provided another way. Luke 4:1 tells us about Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. Before I go into the story, I want to make an important point. The story of the temptations of Christ are not a template of "how we are to behave in the face of temptation..." No, far from it. Rather, it will be because Jesus was able to deal with sin, that another way with dealing with sin has been opened to us.

We begin with our Gospel story. After Jesus was baptized, he wandered in the wilderness for 40 days without food. Scripture says that he was hungry. It was during that time that Satan decided to see if he could take advantage of Jesus' state. The devil said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." It was Satan's intention to see if he could tempt Jesus to throw away His trust in God, His trust that God would meet his needs... and instead to put his trust in something else.

Satan's first temptation was get Jesus to rely on himself. When Satan tempted him to change the rocks into bread, what he was saying is that "you should provide for yourself using the power which God has given you." On the surface... sounds okay. But in reality, there was a deeper, more insidious motive. You see, Satan was really tempting Jesus to ignore that fact that God had sustained him for 40 days without food and that NOW, at the last part of his trial Jesus should suddenly decide to not rely on God and exert his personal control over the test But Jesus was not fooled. Jesus replied, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by the Word of God. What Jesus was saying was that God had sustained him until now, and

therefore he was going to continue to trust in God to meet his true needs and not try to meet his own physical needs independently of God.

The second temptation by Satan was that Jesus could gain authority over all Earthly kingdoms if Jesus would simply worship Satan instead of God. Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Now it is important to know, this was a temptation directed specifically at Jesus. What Satan was offered Jesus was a shortcut to Jesus' becoming Lord over everything. Satan offered a path which avoided the crucifixion, the abandonment, the suffering, the dying, etc. It was a real temptation.... But, again, Jesus is not fooled. Jesus sees through Satan's lies. First these kingdoms were NOT ultimately Satan's to give. Secondly, Jesus came to save Mankind, He specifically came to suffer on the cross and die to redeem man. To take Satan's shortcut was to avoid the very purpose of His coming to Earth. When Jesus says "though shalt worship the Lord, thy God only" what he was saying was that "God's will be done." And it was God's will that mankind be saved.

Finally, Satan tempts Jesus to fall by twisting scripture and in doing so to lure Jesus away from God's plan. He says "if you are the Son of God, then the Angels will protect you." "Prove to me that you are the Son of God. Jump." Here is the lie is that Satan is handing Jesus. Satan has questioned whether Jesus is the son of God and He is implying that it is Jesus' responsibility to prove it to him. Whether Satan believes that Jesus is the Son of God, or not, is immaterial. Jesus is who he is. Jesus' does not have to prove anything. However, we also know that proof was given. There is no "IF." At Jesus' baptism, and later at his transfiguration, it was God himself who identified Jesus as his beloved son, the one that he had chosen, the Messiah. So, when Jesus said that "thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." what he was saying was that it was God's Word which proved his claims not His own works.

So now, we look at the three temptations. What do they have in common? In all three ways, Satan attempted to get Jesus to trust something other than God:

- to trust himself,

- to take a shortcut instead relying on God's time

- to distrust the very Word of God.