

First Sunday in Lent

Genesis 2:15-17; 3: 1-7

Romans 5: 12 -19

Matthew 4 : 1-11

It is a good and wonderful feeling to know God, but even greater to love and serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is certainly the lily of the valley the bright and morning star.

Jesus experienced real temptations, and thwarted them using two weapons that are available to us today----the scriptures and being prepared with words.

Every year at this time the Gospel lesson tells the story of the temptation of Jesus. This year the story is from Matthew, next from Mark and then from Luke. There are some variations in each version but we get the message. Some might ask why the same story every year, I ask why not hear it every day?

Temptation comes or rears its head everyday doesn't it. I doubt that there is a person in this building who did not experience some kind of temptation yesterday and will experience some tomorrow.

Sometimes temptation comes as headline makers that end careers, sometimes marriages, and lives. Many of us have been tempted by drugs, money, alcohol, and even sex. Those are some of the big ones.

There are other temptations a bit more subtler, snap at your wife or husband, ignore children, make promises you never intend to keep, tell a lie to get off the hook, and even cut corners on your taxes.

The Gospel today tells us that Jesus faced three temptation attempts. Looking at them we say that his were not as ours. There was no sex, alcohol or drugs. When was Jesus tempted should be the question. Think about it, as you recall where were you when temptation reared its head?

I suspect as Jesus was you were at a very low point in your life. You as Jesus, were very vulnerable weak, alone , troubled.

After spending forty days and forty nights in the wilderness, Jesus was hungry and vulnerable. He was at a very low place in his life and the devil stepped in to set the agenda.

Very few of us have been hungry-----really hungry-----starving hungry, we don't miss meals or a day without food. We do not know real thirst a day without water. People in the Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan, Haiti, understand this hunger and thirst. They have been and are hungry and thirsty, they are mentally foggy and lethargic they are desperate. They identify with the hunger and thirst that Jesus felt and feels for them today. We do not know real hunger. What some of us do know is desperation.

All of us have been desperate for something:

- For Love---A kind word---attention**
- Foot on the ladder---education---a job---chance to succeed**
- Parents approval----the approval of that special person**

When tempted to turn stone into bread it was not so much about that temptation but who was the devil putting in charge. We cannot let the devil set the agenda. If we follow the devils lead you can be assured that your feet are on a very slippery slope. The devil says put one foot here, no problem, place the other foot here, no problem and then.....Whoops! Look out below.

Our tendency is to think that the problem of evil is simply sociological. Giving people a decent place to live, food to eat, and an education and a real shot at life that problem of evil will evaporate. Not so.

The devil is an evil force opposing God, opposing good and spreading ill. You may not want to acknowledge the little red guy with the pitchfork, but it's not all difficult to believe there is evil in our world. If you don't believe, open and read your newspaper, follow the news on tv and see all the evidence anyone could want. We have the current President accusing the former President of wiretapping his office. Open your eyes to the evil acts committed today even in our own backyards and in front of us. We don't have to travel to the middle east to see and witness evil, we only have to go to mid- county St. Louis. Let's keep it real.

Brothers and sisters the devil, the tempter is busy, hardly a day goes by that we are not tempted to do something wrong. Sometimes small things, some large things. Sometimes we succumb, and sometimes we prevail.

We ask, where is the devil is present just waiting, planning, looking for a weak moment to strike. The devils job is to

destroy us and our families. His job is setting the table and planning the agenda. It is so easy for us to forget our children and grandchildren, they are easy prey. They come home to empty houses, watch television, get on the internet.

Parents come home to tired to have a conversation with the children. Let them have freedom, they don't want freedom they want and need attention they want limits. They want and need someone who takes a little time to know what they are doing and what is troubling them and cares enough to say NO!

How many of us remember learning how to swim? My mom and dad were not swimmers nor were many of my aunt's uncles and friends. Some of us were wise enough to start in the shallow end of the pool and over weeks move to 9ft. deep water but some just jumped in and praise God survived. They were not safe and the environment was not safe. This is a less protected environment and our children should be prepared to handle it.

The Gospel today told us that Jesus was tempted three times by the devil.

- ✓ The first dealt with hunger---God provided Manna to calm the hunger.**
- ✓ The second dealt with water (Exodus 17) strike the rock water will gush out**
- ✓ The third to worship a golden calf**

Jesus rebuffed or rebuked the devil three times and did it with two weapons we have even today. First he used scripture, Jesus was prepared and was raised in a Godly home. He knew the bible from front to back.(Oh to be so fortunate) He used

scripture to parry the temptations and it worked. Those scriptures are available today for our use. As small as we are St. B's has three bible study groups, Sunday morning, Wednesday morning and Tuesday evening one must be a fit. Keep a bible next to your favorite chair. Read bible stories to your children and grands. They will enjoy that. That is the way to prepare them for the world that they will face.

Scriptures defeated the devil along with the ability to just say NO!

Don't wrestle with the devil it's not worth the time and energy just remember: "Get behind me Satan". Turn your back and walk away. It gets easier every time.

When the devil left angels came and ministered to Jesus. That is the payoff!

The devil is not faithful but God IS!

AMEN

