

Discovering Hunger

The Rev. Geoff Parker to Foreside Community Church - Falmouth, ME

Sunday, March 10, 2019

Scripture: [Luke 4:1-13](#)

This is the first week of Lent, and so for the next six weeks we will be following a theme through the scriptures. In ancient practice of the church, those who were preparing to be baptized into full membership of the community would use Lent for a time of learning and formation. It is always good to go back and learn again, and so we are following suit, this time through the theme of “Discovery.” What those new members of the church were discovering through Lent was the gifts and callings of Christ in the church, and their own unique and new place in that beloved community... It was a time of discovering a “new” self, and indeed, a new life in the resurrection story of Jesus and his followers.

We begin, as we always do, with a story of Jesus driven by the Spirit into the wilderness. You know the wilderness, right? It’s the unknown, the unfamiliar, the uncomfortable... it’s the loss of a job, it is mourning over a loved one, it is a season of uncertainty, of wondering.

It is the *Spirit* that drives Jesus to the wilderness though... and there he faces temptation. If you track the story straight through the small case “devil”, or tempter, offers three temptations.

of sustenance,
of power,
of security.

We often talk about Jesus resisting these three temptations, partly because they are ones that we are so familiar with.

Sustenance. Every year, as Lent comes, I feel like we have to go through a reminder that you do not have to fast to love Jesus. You do not have to wrestle with unhealthy and unhelpful food and body images. You do not have to give some thing up... well, one thing, maybe... But the real temptation here might better be described as “more than we need” its the desire to stockpile bread while others go hungry... What Jesus is quoting from Deuteronomy here is a story about trusting God to supply God’s people with exactly what they need.

Power. Doubtless one of the most tempting temptations, no? We could really fix some stuff around here if I were in charge, right? To a one, on any given day, we all can be convinced that we would use power over others or systems or nations... but for the greater good. Except all we need to see is that in every time and every place wise leaders and foolish ones fall into the same traps.

Security. This temptation is what I sometimes call the temptation of the TSA. The idea that if we add just one more security measure... we will finally and totally... be safe. We yearn for it... for ourselves, for our children. And yet... to live in this human life is to deal with our own frailty and vulnerability. We cannot escape those truths. Every time we try to we necessarily trap ourselves and others behind some sort of wall. There is not a barrier to protect us from our own humanity.

A gentle reminder that the devil in this story is just as comfortable using the bible to justify itself, lest we ever be tempted to think that there is only one way to read the scriptures, or that the scriptures themselves have a particular ethic... they are inspired by the Holy Spirit, but they are just as prone to operator error as any complex tool. Reading without a life of prayer, or without compassion, or without Jesus... your mileage may vary.

There is one temptation to rule these all, though... because this is not a story about what tempts us... it is a story about what will tempt Jesus. **The temptation of Jesus is to be something other than what he is... the temptation on offer of the devil here is to be some other kind of savior.** Some savior that never knows hunger. Some savior that saves through conquest and empires. Some savior who is always *safe*.

Lent asks us above all, do we have the courage to be exactly who we are as the beloved of God we were created to be? To reject all the temptations to be something other than God's own heart. To be hungry, humble, and vulnerable enough to discover our true identity and calling as a child, and as a part of the community, of God. To give up all that might make us secure, or powerful over others, or safe... to be more truly ourselves, more truly human.

How do I know this is possible? Because our children find it within themselves to think of those that are hungry, and give, and invite you to give. How do I know it is possible? Because an anonymous donor in this congregation was vulnerable enough to give a gift to the youth ministry, and gave them power to decide how to use it... a gift which allowed us to take that holy time away this weekend at our intergenerational retreat and dream of God's vision for our community across the generations. How do I know it is possible? Because I have seen us talk together as community, vulnerable and open, discovering more clearly who we are in God.

This Lent, we will continue to discover our new identity and life in the way and ministry of Jesus Christ. Today, we begin with the gift of the spirit, the hunger, which draws us to and through the wilderness to seek a more full sense of who we are, and who God has called us to be.

May you be unafraid to discover... to see your self through the eyes and love of God as you are. Amen.