

Sunday, February 21: ***First Sunday in Lent***

Readings: Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

Romans 10:8b-13

Luke 4:1-13

Prayer: *O Lord God, you led your people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide us now, so that, following your Son, we may walk safely through the wilderness of this world toward the life you alone can give, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*

Focal Verse: "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in 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." Luke 4:1-2

Reflection: Being a steward, following the example of Jesus, calls on us to make decisions and choices that may fly in the face of contemporary culture. This requires a strength and discipline which is available to each of us, if we ask for it.¹⁰

The gospel text concerns the major motif of the day: resistance to temptation. As the last act in preparation for his public ministry, Jesus faces three temptations in the wilderness. Two things are important to note. The first is simply that Jesus was tempted. In *God and Human Suffering*, Douglas John Hall distinguishes between integrative suffering and destructive suffering. The latter destroys life, the former serves it, because integrative suffering opens the possibility, of deeper faith and a fuller expression of our creatureliness.

Jesus was tempted to misconstrue his relationship to God. Such changes would have affected his relationship with other humans and undermined his capacity to redeem the world. During Lent we consider those temptations that twist the faith and the ethics of the Kingdom of God in ways that distort the believer's relationship to God, thereby distorting the self and its relationship to the people God loves.

The antidote that Jesus used in resisting temptation was a profound understanding of scripture. In each of his answers he appeals to a passage from the Hebrew Bible. The antidote for contemporary believers is likewise a deeper immersion in the scriptures as a whole. I say "as a whole," because even Satan makes use of a passage from the Bible, thereby suggesting how easily misled we can be by partial citations.¹¹

What do you hear?

How does it make you feel?

Toward what are you being drawn?

What do you sense you should do?

¹⁰ Pollesei, Michael, Sunday by Sunday

¹¹ "[Journey to Freedom.](#)" Michaela Bruzzese, "Living the Word," 2004.