

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

14 February



Photo © Celia Kemp, 2014. Used with permission.

Luke 4: 1-15

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. The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.' Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone."'

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.' Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."'

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you", and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." ' Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." ' When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

REFLECT

Jesus had just been baptized and dramatically affirmed by God.

Now he is led into forty days of starvation and temptation by the devil in a desert.

We get an indication of what Jesus was longing for by what he was offered.

You can imagine how painfully difficult it must have been uselessly sitting around in this empty space.

How reasonable the devil must have sounded.

God said you were his son? Would a father want his son to be this hungry? God gave the Israelites bread in the wilderness right? If God hasn't provided it then surely he is waiting for you to sort it?

Three times the devil suggests Jesus take control of the situation rather than just waiting in trust on God's word.

If Jesus wants God to manifest, well force God's hand. If Jesus wants the kingdoms of this world, instead of this barren desert where he has nothing, switch allegiance and he will have them.

This sort of temptation is everywhere in our modern world. You can imagine the devil sidling up to Jesus in an expensive suit and saying – Don't be so passive. If it is to be, it is up to me. God helps those who help themselves.

It takes vast strength not to act in obedience to God, when the devil in the guise of the weight of the world's advice is telling you the opposite.

It reaps rewards beyond imagining.

For there is no space that God opens up in our lives that God does not fill.

SAYINGS

Who The Meek Are Not

Not the bristle-bearded Igors bent
under burlap sacks, not peasants knee-deep
in the rice-paddy muck,
nor the serfs whose quarter-moon sickles
make the wheat fall in waves
they don't get to eat. My friend the Franciscan
nun says we misread
that word *meek* in the Bible verse that blesses them.

To understand the meek
(she says) picture a great stallion at full gallop
in a meadow, who -
at his master's voice - seizes up to a stunned
but instant halt.
So with the strain of holding that great power
in check, the muscles
along the arched neck keep eddying,
and only the velvet ears
prick forward, awaiting the next order.

Mary Karr

Sometimes, when Christian writers have tried to explain what it meant for Satan
to revolt against God and fall from heaven, they have suggested that Satan
preferred the idea of an unreal world of which he was in charge to a real world in
which all glory was due to God; it is not a bad definition of the essence of evil.

Rowan Williams
Silence and Honey Cakes

PRAY

[40 days of Jesus in the desert](#)

Close with the following prayer:

*God help us to live slowly:
To move simply:
To look softly:
To allow emptiness:
To let the heart create for us.*

Amen

Michael Leunig

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Is there space in your life for God?

What things are you tempted to fill space with?

Where are you tempted to act when is God asking you to wait?