

Lutheran Church of the Master
580 Kuhn Road, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188
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February 20/21, 2010
Lent 1
"Called to Follow Jesus with Confidence"

Prayer of the Day

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.

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16
Version)

(New International

- ¹ He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. ^[a]
- ² I will say ^[b] of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."
- ⁹ If you make the Most High your dwelling—
even the LORD, who is my refuge—
- ¹⁰ then no harm will befall you,
no disaster will come near your tent.
- ¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;
- ¹² they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
- ¹³ You will tread upon the lion and the cobra;
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.
- ¹⁴ "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
- ¹⁵ He will call upon me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honor him.
- ¹⁶ With long life will I satisfy him
and show him my salvation."

Luke 4:1-13
Version)

(New International

¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, ²where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

³The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

⁴Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'^[a]"

⁵The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷So if you worship me, it will all be yours."

⁸Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'^[b]"

⁹The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰For it is written:

" 'He will command his angels concerning you
to guard you carefully;

¹¹they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'^[c]"

¹²Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'^[d]"

¹³When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

"This is my Son ... listen to him." Remember ... that is what we read in the Gospel last week. Last week we were reminded that those words were spoken at the event called the transfiguration ... but when they were spoken, they were a reminder of an event a couple years earlier ... that event in which Jesus had come to his cousin John and had been baptized ... because there for the first time the voice had also been recorded to have said: "this is my son, listen to him"

This week we listen to Jesus as he is "coming out" ... coming out of the water of his baptism ... come out of the relative obscurity of his home ... emerging from being a carpenter's son and from being Mary's little boy ... now he is ready to go from the frying pan into the fire ... for some of us, the time of testing in our career developments may have been college, grad school, or vocational school ... as we thought about what we were planning to do and we started thinking about it seriously ... is this really what I want to do for the rest of my life?

From the waters of his baptism Jesus is lead into the wilderness for forty days ("a long time") of testing ... and every time he is tested, the answer is the same: "it is written."

We really shouldn't be surprised at this ... after all, even though Scripture had not yet been accumulated into a written form, nonetheless Jesus knew it ... after all, he had inspired it! He didn't have to read it or hear it or learn it ... it was about HIM and it had been inspired by HIM ... so when he says "it is written" he is saying it from the perspective of its author ... he was saying: "I said ... you don't live by bread alone ... you should only worship God ... and don't tempt God."

Remembering the voice from Jesus' Baptism ... and hearing today's Gospel reading ... the implication is to listen. In the case of the Gospel lesson, this is a time when God is teaching the devil a lesson ... even you, Satan ... there is more to life than things ... only God is worthy of worship ... and God will not be tempted."

You and I didn't inspire Scripture ... we didn't breathe it into the head of those who committed it to quill and scrolls ... this book certainly isn't about us ... but the point is that it is for us!

I hope you realize that this morning ... like we said on Ash Wednesday, it isn't about us. Whether it be this Lenten journey ... the waters of baptism ... the meal of bread and wine ... the written word called Scripture handed down now for almost 2000 years ... it isn't about us.

Baptism isn't about your decision to follow Jesus ... it is about God's decision to follow you. Communion isn't about your understanding of what God is up to ... it is about God's desire to get into you and me whatever means it takes. Lent isn't about your journey to find God ... it is all about God's journey in Christ to find us!

And that is what this book called the Bible is all about. For over 4,000 years now, men and women like you and me have been convinced that there is a supreme being that created all this ... in the earliest cultures, our forbearers decided that there were many of these supreme beings who played different roles ... and from their cosmic places in the heavens, they played humans like chess pieces on the playing board of terra firma ...

But then, about 4,000 years ago ... one guy named Abram claimed to have received a call from a special god eventually called ELOHIM or JAHWEH ... and so Abram packed up his wife Sarai and family and set off for the promised land ... that is what this book tells us about ... and through his descendants (which includes patriarchs and matriarchs ... revolutionary leaders and charismatic leaders ... judges and kings ... prophets and priests) the promise came true.

And through this promise 2,000 years ago ... half the distance from Abram and Sarai to you and me ... there was born this Jesus whose baptism we celebrated as we moved from Christmas into Epiphany and whose transfiguration we remembered as we moved from Epiphany into Lent.

So today ... listen to Jesus ... as he quotes Scripture to us. And what he says is Good News ... which is what “the Gospel” means ... it is good news for the likes of us to know that there is more to life than what we shall eat or wear or own or buy ... there is nothing wrong with those things ... but food passed through the body ... clothes wear out ... what we own eventually ends up being distributed in our estates ... and what is new this moment is old tomorrow. Is that all there is (the old song asks)? And Jesus says: NO ... and that is Good News.

There are a lot of things that seek to be number one in our lives and in our living ... and most of them good and great things ... but new cars won't drive us anywhere at the grave ... the Cubs may eventually win the series but they'll never give life after death ... the stock market may increase our net worth, but I've never noticed a difference between a rich corpse and a poor corpse ... politics may be a good way of making decisions about things in this life, but neither party can offer eternal life. Is that all there is? And Jesus says: NO ... and that is Good News.

Even the words of Scripture can become separated from the Lord of the Scriptures. Some who know the words the best still don't know the one who spoke them. Everybody likes to use the words of Scripture when it is to their convenience ... Presidents do (where would George W be or Bill Clinton have been if they didn't have Scripture to quote when it was to their convenience?), musicians do (have you ever noticed how many Biblical quotations find their way into secular music ... even rock music, Country & Western), television serials do (the misquotations can often be quite amusing) ... just knowing the words from this book ... Is that all there is? And Jesus says: NO ... and that is Good News.

GOOD NEWS always starts in Scripture because Scripture points to it ... from Abram and Sarai through the Revelation ... “THERE SHALL BE BORN ... THERE SHALL BE ... AND THE ANGELS SANG AT HIS BIRTH ... AND HE WAS BAPTIZED ... AND HE GATHERED THE TWELVE ... AND THEY ENTERED JERUSALEM ... AND HE TURNED OVER THE TABLES ... AND HE TOOK THE BREAD ... AND HE TOOK THE CUP ... AND THEY WENT TO THE GARDEN ... AND HE WAS ARRESTED ... AND THEY STRIPPED HIM AND CRUCIFIED HIM ... AND THEY BURIED HIM ... AND THE GROUND SHOOK AND THE GRAVE WAS OPENED ... AND THE WOMEN WENT RUNNING SAYING HE HAD BEEN RISEN AS HE SAID HE WOULD BE” And that is ALL Good News.

Every now and then that Good News impacts your life and mine. Not always ... if you're trying to decide if you should go east or west on vacation, only a magical interpretation of Scripture will help you decide. But sometimes it is just amazing ... this Good News ... in its impact on life. But sometimes, this confidence is simply amazing!

If you have your Bible with you, please turn to Judges 7 ... remember Gideon ... the guy after whom those Bibles are named that you find in the night stand at the motel room?

God has assigned Gideon to lead the fight against the Midianites ... remember the fleece? (Lord, if you want me to do this make the fleece wet and the ground dry ... and it was so ... so a second time Gideon said "Lord if you want me to do this make the fleece dry and the ground wet" ... and it was so.) So, now he's ready except God comes into the scene again and says:

Are you ready? And Gideon says: "I know we can do it ... I've got 32,000 men fighting for me." So God says, "Is that right ... let's see ... 22,000 of them are scared and left." "Now, Gideon, can you do this?"

And Gideon says, "Yes God, we can do it ... I've got an army of 10,000...NO PROBLEM ... WE CAN DO IT!" So God says, "Is that right ... let's see ... get rid of the soldiers who kneel down to drink." "Now, Gideon ... use the ones that are left."

And Gideon says ... "Good Lord ... that leaves only 300! We can't do it!"

And God said: "Now, Gideon, you're ready! See if you know you can do it, then you don't need me! If I have to, I'll reduce your resources so that you will have to trust me. And with three groups of a hundred men in each armed with trumpets and empty jars with trumpets inside they won the battle.

When our resources are depleted and we don't know how we can survive, that is when God is at God's best! And therein is our confidence!

Prayer ... "Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, but paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us, and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen"
