

The Temptations of our Times

Sermon Notes for Mar 5 2017 at Brentwood



Ps 32 and Matthew 4:1-11

**Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit
into the wilderness
to be tempted by the devil.
(Matt 4:1)**

Provocative Ponderings that Call Forth Our Potential in Christ

- Led up by the Spirit – accompanied by the Spirit – never left alone by our Creator, Redeemer, and Reformer – reflections on the ways in which this God acts in and for our benefit as blessings to this world
- A powerful image of the dynamics of the temptations – by Medicine Hat, AB, artist Jason Hawn – let's begin with how Jesus is portrayed – start with the strong positive rather than the negative – clearly in pain (tear running down nose) – but surrounded by the light of the Spirit filled with the cross – in the strength of that loyalty to the Father's mission, a determination to rely on the Spirit for compassion and courage
- Temptations of Christ = power, possessions, and prestige – in all of them, overstepping the boundaries God placed on our freedoms in creation – we are not designed or equipped to exercise this kind of control – we do not have the knowledge to provide this kind of security, affection, and power on our own – rather, we flourish most fully when we follow the way of Jesus Christ that leads through the sacrifice of the cross – so, that's God's way of dealing with temptations – humble confidence in the way of the cross
- Exploring the temptations of our times this week with friends and colleagues – three came up most frequently and powerfully – 1) denial of the presence of evil, of the devil – the shadow within us – the urge to rebel against the constraints on our freedoms placed on us by God due to our capacities – we are not made to be in total control and flourish 2) fanaticism – extremes of this rebellion that seeks total control – imposing what we think is the only right way on everyone else – tyranny of our arrogance 3) despair – giving up hope of anything better – getting helplessly entangled in the negatives happening to us – giving up all sense of capacity to contribute - blind to the presence of the Spirit creating new possibilities for us

At this point in our ponderings, then ...

Let's go back to our M&P text – the Spirit leads us into the wilderness and temptations – stays with us all the way – constantly offering positive possibilities rooted in the faithful patience and providence of God – open our eyes to this grace in the midst of our anxieties

Notes for a sermon preached by Brian Fraser,
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