

Tempted by What?

Sermon Notes for Feb 18, 2018 at Brentwood

Psalm 25:1-10 (492) & Mark 1:9-15 (912)



The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; ...

(Mark 1:12-13a)

Provocative Ponderings that Call Forth Our Potential in Christ

Right after Jesus' baptism, this comes – driven, impelled, out into the wilderness – by the Spirit – Mark's account is vivid in its use of these urgent words - to be tempted by the anxieties and anger of evil – captured powerfully in this image by Medicine Hat artist Jamie Hawn – a demonic energy that is both outside and inside of us – brings pain and suffering – what God wants to heal by the wonder and wisdom of being welcomed home into the world-wide family of God - why this flow in the stories of the gospels? – what are the temptations that come with God's affirmation and reminder of our true belonging and calling in baptism?

- no details in Mark – have to go to Matthew (4:1-11) and Luke (4:1-12) for those – essentially, the temptations are possessions, prestige, and power – these seeming sources of the good life can so easily tempt our loyalty away from God's desires and intents – so easily become barriers to right relationships with God, with others, and with ourselves – especially in a secular society where these things are marketed to us continually as the keys to authenticity and happiness
- Christians have traditionally begun the season of Lent with reflections on the temptations of Christ – a time of reflecting on the authentic sources of flourishing – at the very beginning of his mission, Jesus is driven, impelled, to consider where his loyalties really lie and what might get in the way of living out those loyalties? – because without that clarity about the source and support of his work, he's not going to have the resilience to walk humbly with God into a new world of justice and kindness
- Lent is a time to pay intense attention to disciplines that will draw us closer to the God we find revealed in Jesus Christ – a time to work through the distractions that draw us away from that God and develop habits that will align us more faithfully with the authentic life of blessing that God offers us

*Notes for a sermon preached by Brian Fraser,
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So, what are we going to do with this ...

Let me suggest a possibility, a discipline that you might find both simple and profound – choose a word or a phrase that feels particularly positive and powerful for you at this point in your life – it might be a word from Scripture, from a book you have been reading, a meme on Facebook or Instagram that you have run across – test it to see how deeply the Spirit makes you resonate with it – then write it down and ponder it throughout Lent this year – for me, the phrase appeared in my Facebook feed this morning – from Dorothy Day – founder of the Catholic Workers Movement in the US – “The Duty of Delight” – turns out it’s the title of a book drawn from her diaries, so I’ve ordered that to ponder over Lent this year – she lived with and faced full-on the pain and suffering of the working poor in the US – so I’ll be listening for her discovery of delight in the midst of those realities - hope you can find something equally fascinating – I’d be happy to explore possibilities with you - and we will find a time to share our ponderings

Your Notes ...

Today’s Framework for our Prayers

Thanks – for your resilient care for us as we face the temptations in our lives, temptations that draw and drive us away from our true source of flourishing in you and you alone – in this time of silence, remind us of those tempting energies in our lives ... [a time of silent prayer]

Help – minister to us in the midst of all the temptations that flood our attention daily – help us to remember the example of loyal love that you have given us in Jesus Christ – in this time of silence, give us a word to focus on during Lent that will set our minds and hearts on you as our source of flourishing ... [a time of silent prayer]

Awe – that you love us in spite of, indeed in the midst of, all our foolish rebellions against your calling to bless this creation with every gift you have given us – in this time of silence, focus our attention on one such gift to cultivate this week ... [a time of silent prayer]