

Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Mar 1, 2020 – Lent 1 with Holy Communion

The Real Temptations of Modern Life

(Ps 91 and Luke 4:1-13)



Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. (Luke 4:1-2a)

Fascinations to consider

Two dynamics in this story stood out for me in reading it this time – the first was the setting and the second was the main actor – it's the Spirit in Jesus Christ acting in wilderness – so, like the stories in the Acts of the Apostles that we have been digging into since last Sept, Luke (the author of both the gospel and the acts) is consistent in focusing on the work of the Trinity in forgiving and reconciling the world to its Creator – historically, wilderness would have brought up for Luke's hearers the Exodus experience that was so formative for Jesus' people, the Jews – liberation from slavery to become again agents of God's blessing in and for the world – contemporaneously, both then and now, it was an arid and barren place, devoid of water and food – but in that place, as people were being freed from the tangles of trauma that made up slavery, God provided what was needed – manna from heaven and water from the rock – this is a story about Jesus awakening to the strength that comes from the Spirit's care in midst of the wilderness that is human life

Provocations to ponder

There are very real and persistent forces within and without that seem to separate us from the community of self-giving love that is the triune God – they have entangled us since our first ancestors gave in to **THE** real temptation – the one from which all others flow – that temptation was the delusion that we could be like God – knowing good and evil (Gen 3:5) – we could know everything necessary to control the world and make it good – and we could do this without being in humble companionship with our Creator – without trusting in the unique love of that belonging – without walking with God practicing justice, kindness, and humility – Yuval Noah Harari has written best-sellers called *Sapiens* and *Homo Deus* – an Israeli teaching in Jerusalem – takes a broad look at humanity in creation – in *Homo Deus*, the three sections of the book are entitled

'*Homo Sapiens* Conquers the World,' '*Homo Sapiens* Gives Meaning to the World,' and '*Homo Sapiens* Loses Control' – I have serious questions about Harari's definitions of religion and spirituality, but that's for another time – his core thesis in this book is that humans want to upgrade themselves to God and are messing up in the process – and my suggestion would be that's been happening for a long, long time – in the Judeo-Christian tradition, we see it having happened at the very beginning of human life – what we might best call the 'original rupture' – out of that rupture in our belonging with God emerged frustration, anger, violence, and destruction – compounding generation after generation – and the only solution to that, our story this morning suggests, is to awaken to the Spirit that fills us and be reconciled with the Creator who formed us out of dust so we come home to dignity and worth of being friends and servants of God, not incompetent gods ourselves

Compassion to practice

Begin to consider how you are living your lives – that's what Lent is all about, at its best – prayerful consideration, integrating instinct, emotion, and intellect, of our relationships with God, others, and ourselves – so, where in your lives are you delusional about your power, distracted in your focus, and destructive in your relationships – what difference would it make if you accepted the gift of awakening to the abundant life found in doing justice, seeking kindness, and walking humbly with the Creator – the gift that is yours in the Spirit without condition because of the forgiving and reconciling work of Jesus Christ – perhaps one of the disciplines to practice during this Lenten season, then, is to let go of your urges/needs to be god and accept with joy and contentment the rich possibilities of human life as our Creator intended it to be – we'll remind each other of that intent when we sing the Nine Teachings of the Apostles – and we will be fed in them at this family dinner – come, let us feast in deep gratitude

My Notes



My Prayers