

Did God Really Say?

Texts: Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Romans 10:8b-13 (Series C. First Sunday in Lent) Ps.91:1-2, 9-16

Luke 4:1-13

Let us pray”

Lead us, O God, to streams of Living Water. Speak in this place, in the calming of our minds and the longing of our hearts, by the words of my lips and in the thoughts we form. Bring us freshness, new growth and vitality, that we may be fruitful for thee, our rock and our redeemer.
Amen.

During baptism the question is ask. *"Do you renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways?"* Most likely, our parents and godparents answered on our behalf with a firm "Yes, I do." Many of us were asked that same question on the day of our confirmation and as we confessed our faith in front of the whole congregation, we once again said confidently, *"Yes, I do reject the devil and everything he does, so that I will no longer be led by him."*

When God promised to be our constant companion through life, and when we responded with our own words of loyalty and trust in God, we promised that we would not fall victim to Satan's deceptions. How successful have we been in what we promised?

Are you feeling as guilty, as I am, because we know that too easily and too often, we have been led by Satan into all kinds of things that we know are not what God wants us to do? We can all relate to giving in to temptations, right!.

Today's Scriptural lessons are about taking sides. About putting God first in our lives. About remembering whose we are and what has been done for us. About declaring our loyalties. I want us to look primarily at the gospel reading today.

When we look at the temptation story - and try to understand a bit of what it is all about. At first glance the temptations of Jesus seem strange. They seem so unlike our temptations: to take things, to use people, and to ignore God. They seem so odd.

Make bread out of stones? Leap from the temple? Worship Satan to gain the world? We can't really conceive of these kinds of temptations being related to the temptations that we experience.

Yet the temptations of Jesus are ours, for Satan is with us as he was with Jesus; he is with us not so much to get us to do wrong things - we do not need help in that department - but to develop in us life destroying attitudes and beliefs; to develop in us those things that will take us further and further away from God's love.

Till one day we discover that we have no faith at all, that we are people without hope and without purpose, that we are – in short - completely lost - living only for today, living only for ourselves.

As a teacher of mine put it: Satan is interested in what we think; in what we believe about ourselves, and God. Look at Satan. What is he saying in the temptation story that we heard today a moment ago?

- "If you are the Son of God ... change these stones into bread.....If you are ...
- If you really, think you are -- then can you not prove your power through a self-serving miracle?
- If you are really loved by God, can you not prove God's care by leaping from the temple?
- If you really want to change the world - if that is your mission - can you not do it better in the way that I show you? If you are the child of God, then why can't you, why don't you..."Think about that voice for a minute.

The voice Jesus heard as he wandered through the wilderness that we so often walk through in our lives – the wilderness not of sand, rock, and bush - but the wilderness of the souls....

The wilderness of a world that does not care - of a world that does not provide anyone an easy time of things - but rather is coldly, indifferent if not openly hostile to us and to what we want and what we feel.

How often have we heard the kind of words in ourselves that Jesus heard at the end of his forty days of wandering - that voice speaking inside our minds and hearts - whispering quietly - but insistently:

- "If you really are a child of God, would you act that way"
- "If you are really are a child of God - would you not be able to overcome your weaknesses, do the good you intended, straighten yourself out?"
- "If God loved really loved you, would God treat you this way! Would God let you suffer?"

"*Did God really say? Is God really there for you? For anybody?*" "Isn't there an easier a better way? Better than this. Better than now?" The voice of Satan is the voice of *doubt* and *discredit*, that doubt takes two major forms

- doubt in the goodness of God
- and what is commonly called "self-doubt", that doubt that questions who we are, and what we are about – the *credibility of God*, not for the purpose of improving ourselves or causing us to turn to God, but for the purpose of tearing down whatever good that may have been built up in us and causing us to wonder if there is any point in our continuing to live, or in trying to be faithful.

One of the biggest occasions of doubt that arises in the life of believers is related to the reality of temptation - and to the fact that we all too often succumb to it. I think we all know the feeling -we are unfaithful in keeping our promises to God. We pray less.

We promise God that we will not be so impatient with the annoying people in our life and we find ourselves later, yelling at one of them with more vigour than ever before.

Temptation is a human weakness and even with the best of intentions, we all – fall prey to the attraction of some thing, sometimes to especially unhealthy levels to our own or others' detriment.

The readings for this week give chapter and verse on how God hears us, shelters us, and saves us if we but turn toward the Lord our God. The literal translation of "repent" from the Greek is, at its basic level, to turn away from self by turning toward God. (180 degree turn).

These 40 days bring us the time to reconcile our earthly wants with our eternal souls. A time we take to clean out our spiritual closets and blow the dust off hidden temptations, overindulgence, and the shallow distractions that distance us from Christ. It's time to turn the light on what we hide from ourselves and re-awaken to the call of salvation.

I propose to each of us, over these weeks, to worry less about what to "*give up*" and concentrate more on what to "*take on*" to discover what will turn us back toward our Risen Lord and Savior.

Keep *the word near you, on your lips and in your heart* as Paul tells us. Prayer is a starting place even if only "What, How, Where Do I Start?" Jesus gave 40 days and 40 nights to his spiritual growth and strength for beginning of his earthly ministry.

Can you give 40 minutes? Put the phone, the tablet, the computer, social media, online shopping, the tv remote, etc., down for 40 minutes and take on a definitive, intentional, conscious turn toward the Lord by thought and by action, by desire, and most importantly by faith issues such as given yourself time. On Sunday to hear a sermon?

Each of us is called to be obedient, to push and exercise our faith and to trust in God's wisdom. Indeed often it is part of God's plan for us - that same plan that led to the Spirit driving Jesus out into the wilderness where he was tempted.

Temptation is not a sign that we are lost, that we are beyond hope, when we succumb to temptation and do those things we ought not to do and fail to do those things we ought.

If that were so, it would mean that the cross of Christ was to no avail and that his sacrifice on our behalf means nothing? *For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.*"

What could be more important for those of us who call ourselves Christian? Here's an opening just from the Psalm for this week: *You are my refuge and my stronghold, my God in whom I put my trust.* Got 40 minutes?

What the devil wants is that we give up entirely and that we abandon *faith in God* and who we are in God. Don't give up. Have faith. God is on our side - the devil is not.

Do not give up faith in God because of the temptations we feel -nor because of the ones we give in too - but instead we get up on our feet, turn afresh to God, and begin walking once again, remembering the word that God has given us the word of faith that says simply and clearly.

"if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Amen.

Let us pray: O Lord, our God, rescue us from the wilderness of our own making, turn us from fear to faith, and from complacency to action. Help us keep the Word near on our lips and in our hearts as we call upon Your name and serve only You.

A Prayer for Ukraine: Loving God, you are our peace

- **We pray for peace between Russia and Ukraine**
- **We pray for the people of Ukraine, those who are forced to flee, those who are trapped and unable to flee.**
- **Those who are in need of aid, those who have died.**
- **We pray for the Ukraine and Russia soldiers, that they may be moved to lay down their weapons.**

- **We pray for world leaders, that they would be led into your ways of peace and justice.**
- **We pray for our whole world who watches and worries. We ask through Jesus, the Christ of our Salvation; and the Holy Spirit, Divine Breath of our Souls; who together with You are One God, now and forever. Amen.**

Prayer concerns: *Matilda Molyneaux-Piper, Shirley Walker, Hanne Bourgeoise, Sven Berg, Astrid Hylland, Ellen Eriksen, Euclide & Ellen Dahal-Lanteigne, Karen Abasio, Pastor Timothy, the dire tension between Russia and Ukraine, Protectors at various places in Canada, Covid -19 patients, essential and Frontline workers, Note: of thanks to God as the Covid-19 virus is easing off and more restrictions are being lifted, and finally Families of departed souls in recent weeks and months.*

Make melodies in your heart with these hymns:

- **God Loved the World # 323**
- **Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery # 334**
- **Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart # 758**

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Amy Mason

Peter Blair

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

n/a