

Lenten

Reflections



The Divine Intervention

February 14, 2016

Scripture

Luke 4:1-13

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil.

He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry.

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

Jesus answered him,
"It is written, One does not live on bread alone."

Then he took him up and showed him
all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant.

The devil said to him,
"I shall give to you all this power and glory;
for it has been handed over to me,
and I may give it to whomever I wish.

All this will be yours, if you worship me."

Jesus said to him in reply,
"It is written:

You shall worship the Lord, your God,
and him alone shall you serve.”
Then he led him to Jerusalem,
made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him,
“If you are the Son of God,
throw yourself down from here, for it is written:
He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,
and:
With their hands they will support you,
lest you dash your foot against a stone.”
Jesus said to him in reply,
“It also says,
You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.”
When the devil had finished every temptation,
he departed from him for a time.

Our Scripture Reflection

Each first Sunday of Lent we are blessed to hear from one of the "Temptation of Jesus" accounts from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, or Luke. This year we read Luke's account. Luke tells us that Jesus "filled with the Holy Spirit" is "led into the wilderness." Luke will mention the Holy Spirit more than all the other Gospels combined. Why? Because the Spirit is the very power and Presence of God. Therefore, nothing happens by chance, all is under the direction of God.

Aware that Jesus is tired and hungry, Satan tests Jesus three times. He attempts to get Jesus to "play God" rather than to be trusting and humble before His Heavenly Father. Jesus will not fall for Satan's seductions. Each time Satan tempts, Jesus responds by quoting scripture (Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:13 and 6:16). Unlike the ancient people of Israel who failed miserably while in the wilderness when tested, Jesus will emerge victoriously from the desert because of His humility before the Father. The message of this Gospel is simple: Imitate Jesus.

Food for your Journey

The 12-step movement suggests an acronym, HALT, to remind us to pay attention when we become Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired. Unheeded, these natural human conditions can make us vulnerable to temptation. As ridiculous as it sounds, many of us try not to

notice our needs. To admit that I get hungry, angry, lonely, tired -- and the list goes on -- is to acknowledge that I am a contingent being, leaning on a power beyond me.

Jesus is driven into full HALT mode when the Spirit leads him into the wilderness. He experiences the whole pathetic chaos of the human condition. Our raging thirst for power, prestige and honor, our ravishing hunger for material goods and lives of ease, our desire to go it alone yet never be alone. ... All of us will face such times when the crowded life must be left behind, when we must peer into the dark well of our own need, our lust for what we do not have, our weariness with what we do have, our temptation to do and be and possess far beyond our capacity, beyond God's callings for us.

--Kayla McClurg, "Calling a HALT," Inward/Outward e-newsletter for March 9, 2014. inwardoutward.org.

Paul Harvey tells an incredible story describing how Eskimos kill a wolf simply by coating several layers of frozen blood on a sharp knife sticking out of the frozen tundra. Apparently the wolf picks up the scent, and after circling the knife warily begins licking the frozen blood. He begins to lick faster and faster as the desire for blood literally drives the wolf wild. So great becomes his craving that the wolf never notices the sting of the sharp blade on his tongue as the blood being consumed gradually becomes his own. Morning finds the wolf lying dead in the snow.

Temptation lures each of us just as the bloody knife attracts the unsuspecting wolf. We may warily respond at first, but we soon become consumed by the desire of the moment, never noticing the deadly sting of the sharp blade of "sin" as the blood consumed eventually becomes our own.

Prayer from the Heart

Dear Jesus, as I begin a forty day journey with You, pour forth Your Grace, I beg You. When I encounter Satan's temptations, help me to be strong like You by clinging to Your Word. Watch over and protect me, Lord, so that I may emerge from this journey a new person in Your image and likeness. Amen.