

03.10.19

Dallas Dodd Presbyterian

Luke 4:1-13

“Impatience and Waiting It Out”

Our New Testament text today is Luke 4:1-13. I am reading from the NRSV

4 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, **2** where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. **3** The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” **4** Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’”

5 Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.

6 And the devil said to him, “To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. **7** If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” **8** Jesus answered him, “It is written,

‘Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only God.’”

9 Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, **10** for it is written,

‘He will command his angels concerning you,
to protect you,’

11 and

‘On their hands, they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’”

12 Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

13 When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

((This is the Word of the Lord)) ((Thanks be to God))

Today is the first Sunday of Lent. In discussing Lent, Rev. Dr. David Gambrell, associate for worship in the Presbyterian Mission Agency's office of Theology and Worship says: "The season of Lent has served a variety of purposes in the history of the church and the life of Christian communities, specifically a period of preparation for baptism at the annual Easter Vigil; a time for the reconciliation of penitent persons; and an opportunity for spiritual discipline through prayer, fasting, service, and generosity...The common thread—whether one is new to the church, estranged from the community, or wanting to grow in faith and faithfulness—is [a] deeper and more authentic relationship with God and one another through Christ. Lent points to the cross, where Jesus is lifted up with arms outstretched in compassion and welcome. And Lent points beyond the cross to the empty tomb, where Jesus offers new and abundant life to all."

Lent is meant to be a time of waiting. We wait for Jesus to be raised on Easter, and while we are patiently waiting and we remember that we are constantly in a state of waiting for Jesus to come again. In our scripture today, we hear about many beings waiting. Jesus is waiting in the wilderness, but also Satan is waiting for an opportune time to test Jesus. It can feel often like we are waiting forever. Think about a timeframe of 40 days. Currently, we are at the very beginning of a 40-day timeframe. And it seems to be stretching before us forever. This is a nearly 6-week period. We are standing right at the beginning and we are already waiting for the moment of Easter.

I am not a patient person. There has never been a time that someone explained my general personality as "patient." I'm not even calm while other people are waiting. I'm the one who is pacing or talking a little too much for any kind of peace to be occurring within anyone else.

It seems like there is always a waiting period when you want something bad enough. It can be a few minutes, or days, or weeks- but you have to wait. You could be waiting for a holiday, to see your family. You could be waiting for a friend to visit from out of town. Most days, you could even be waiting for the work day to end. I know often

I am sitting in classes waiting for them to end, so I can go to the next thing on my schedule, or go take a nap.

But in all that waiting, I believe the most patient I have to be is when I have ordered a pizza and it is on its way to my apartment. Has this happened to you? It's not 40 days of waiting, but man does it feel like it. It doesn't help that I've usually waited too long to order said pizza. I've already hit a point of being "Hangry"- that feeling of being very angry over being hungry. As soon as I've clicked the "order" button online, I'm standing at my window. Making sure every single car that passes isn't the pizza place missing my apartment. Eventually logic wins out and I realize pizza takes time to cook. I contemplate that it's about a 15-minute drive to the pizza place. So I sit and tap my nails for 15 minutes.... then we are right back to the window. Surely- the pizza is on its way to me. That 30-40 minutes between ordering pizza and receiving the pizza could be 40 days. In all this waiting that I've done for the pizza on its way to my apartment, I know Jesus waited even longer in the wilderness, while fasting.

Jesus was waiting in the wilderness for 40 days. Hear verses 1 and 2 again: "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, *where for forty days he was tempted by the devil*. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished." Often, I understood this passage as Jesus being tested and tempted just three times in the course of 40 days. I imagined Jesus simply sitting around, spending time on his own, hanging out in the Wilderness and suddenly, Satan pops up, maybe he has been hiding behind a bush or something- and Satan tempts Jesus some, and suddenly he runs off into the night again. I would like to admit to yall, apparently, this was an incorrect assumption. Our passage says that Jesus, "was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil." For 40 days, Jesus was tempted by Satan. We hear about three of these instances but have we thought about what the rest of the time of those 40 days meant to Jesus. It doesn't seem like he was just chilling in the wilderness spending some introvert time contemplating his life. It seems like for 40 days, Jesus was tempted. We don't know if there was time between the temptations. We don't know

if there was any relief for Jesus during the time in the wilderness. We don't know what it was like for Jesus to feel temptation for 40 days, without food.

Truly this seems more intense than waiting on a pizza to arrive at my apartment door. Our passage states, "when the days were over, Jesus was famished." Jesus is not just a little hungry. Jesus is not hangry. Jesus is famished. He has not eaten in 40 days. We don't know if Satan has tried to tempt Jesus with food before this moment. All we see is the moment of Jesus refusing to turn stones to bread even after being famished for 40 days. What's more, is that Jesus argues with Satan about this! He says, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" As a kid, and often now, I think about this "argument" toward not turning the stones to bread. And I see Jesus' point. I get it, and he's right. But my thoughts on this matter are that while we do not live on bread alone, it sure does help. I don't know if I would have turned down the first food offered to me after 40 days.

Next, Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the World, he said everything would belong to Jesus as long as he bowed to Satan. Jesus calmly explained that there would be no gods worshiped other than the one true God, by saying: "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only God.'" Again, I understand what Jesus is saying here. There are so many things that are offering us full power and all happiness as long as we worship *them*. Some days, when we've waited longer and longer for the things we've wanted, it is harder to turn away from those temptations.

Finally, Jesus is taken to the of the pinnacle of the temple, told to throw himself off because the angels that were assigned to him would protect him. Jesus, of course, has a response for this as well. Jesus clearly responds that we are not to test God. Satan leaves until an opportune time. Satan doesn't seem satisfied with his attempts to tempt Jesus. And notice, he doesn't acquiesce to Jesus. He doesn't just accept his answers and arguments against any of the temptations, he just leaves until a better time.

In this time of Lent, in this time of waiting, Jesus spent 40 days in a wilderness only to be tempted by Satan. Perhaps you are in a similar place. Maybe you've felt that

there is only temptation and wilderness at the end of this waiting period. In Jesus' life, he was just baptized. He experienced a moment of the Spirit literally descending upon him and calling him by name, and suddenly he is in the wilderness- being tempted with an "easy out" of power, of glory.

Haven't we all felt that temptation? The temptation of glory and power that is just one decision away? If we make that one decision, everything will get easier and the hard things will go away. Right?

Unfortunately, those are the temptations of Satan in our ears. Those are the words stating that our deepest desires are simply a step away as long as we choose the path that leads to them. Satan is showing us that immediate path and seems to have the perfect way to get there quickly. That path doesn't truly exist friends. The wilderness we are in, and this period of waiting is important. It will remain important, whether we leave it in 2 hours, 40 days, or a year from now. Jesus himself waited in the wilderness and denied the temptations of Satan.

We will be able to resist these temptations and this wilderness with the help of God and the knowledge that we do not live on bread alone, we are to only worship God- above all else, and we are not to test God. Let us go through this wilderness together.

Please pray with me,

God,

You are the God present in the wilderness and in the abundance. As we are in this time of wilderness and waiting. God be present with us and lead us through this time and find us as we are struggling with the temptation of Satan.

In your most holy name,

Amen