

King of Glory Lutheran Church
February 29 & March 1, 2020
Year A: Lent 1: Matthew 4:1-11
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Matthew 4:1-11

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. 3 The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." 4 But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" 7 Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; 9 and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" 11 Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

I've been reading a book given to me by a friend recently. The book is called "Adulthood: How To Become A Grown-Up In 535 Easy(ish) Steps" written by Kelly Williams Brown. It's one of those books where you laugh out loud reading it because so many of the steps are both true and funny. So I don't advise reading it in public. People will look at you funny.

Now you might be wondering as I initially did, is "adulthood" a word? And the answer is yes. I looked it up! The Merriam Webster definition of "adulthood" is "to attend to the ordinary tasks required of a responsible adult."

So this is a book about all the things we have to deal with in life. It has chapters on cleaning, cooking, money, jobs, friends, families, and love.

For example, in the chapter on jobs Step 193 is "Find a Mentor." That's good advice. In the chapter on maintenance Step 272 is "Do not skip oil changes." Also pretty good. Under the friends chapter Step 363 is "Don't leave passive-aggressive notes for your roommates." Yup, there are some of those I wish I could take back!

The toughest steps are in chapter one which is titled, “Get Your Mind Right.” Step 3 is “Don’t get hurt when the world doesn’t care about you.”

Ouch. Brown explains, “People will come to care about you, but only if you give them a valid reason. Don’t assume they’ll give you love like your parents, emotional support like your best friend, and cheerful feedback like a soccer coach... Because they won’t, unless you give them good reason to. And even then, they still probably won’t.”

Being an adult is not easy. Being a person of any age is not easy. The world can be a difficult place to live in. I suppose we don’t really need 535 steps to tell us that. Some days it feels like we are wandering around very much aware that the world does not care about us, just trying to figure out our place in this world.

In our gospel reading today from Matthew we meet Jesus in the wilderness. He goes there after his baptism and spends forty days fasting. And at the end of those forty days the devil comes to him and tempts Jesus with food, power and wealth.

Let’s imagine, just for a moment, those forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness. He is wandering around hungry, uncomfortable and alone. We don’t often think of Jesus as having human experiences and feelings like us, and yet today we meet Jesus hungry, alone, tired, dirty...he is truly human there in the wilderness.

What do you think Jesus did for those forty days? What did he think about? Did he miss his family and friends? Did he wonder how he would begin his ministry? Did he think about the road ahead that would lead him to the cross? I don’t know, but I wonder.

What about you? Have you ever had forty days in a wilderness place? Probably not.

But I expect that you have had the experience of feeling hungry, tired, or alone.

And I also expect that you have times in your life before and after a big life event where you found yourself wondering who you are? Wondering what your purpose is? It is part of the human experience to have those questions and thoughts. At any age, whether we are five or ninety-five.

Now Jesus went into the wilderness after his baptism. Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River and when he came up out of the water the heavens were

opened, the Spirit of God descended on him and a voice said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

So Jesus goes into the wilderness knowing exactly who he is. But after forty days of fasting and contemplation, the question today is, did Jesus remember his identity and his mission?

The devil begins his temptation of Jesus by saying, “If you are the Son of God...” If... The devil pushes at Jesus’ identity. Are you the Son of God? Are you sure? If you really were wouldn’t you have the power to turn stones into bread? Or be free from all harm? Or rule the kingdoms of the world?

And how does Jesus respond? Jesus knows who he is. Jesus says to the devil that God is his strength. He says that God is trustworthy without being put to any test. And Jesus says that he belongs to God and will serve no other.

Yes Jesus has human feelings and experiences but he is also divine, he is the Son of God. No ifs about it.

We learn so much about Jesus today, about the pressures of this world, and about the temptation to play God. God’s power is not about magic tricks or power or wealth. God’s power is about love, humility and compassion.

Every year at the beginning of the season of Lent, as we journey with Jesus to the cross, we remember Jesus’ forty days in the desert and the temptation he faced.

We are invited in this Lenten season to take forty days to pray and fast and give. And we do so knowing that we are not on this Lenten journey alone.

Because there in the wilderness the truth is that Jesus was never alone. He knew his identity as a beloved child of God.

We begin our Lenten journey with the same promise. You are a child of God. God will never leave you and is always with you.

No matter what the world may say to you, what another person may say, or what the voice in your own head and heart says, hear this promise today. You are loved and you are not alone. Do not be afraid and do not despair. Your identity, your strength and your hope come from God who created you and loves you.

During this Lenten season, these forty days, you are invited to pray and fast and give. So let's talk about that.

In this season we are invited to focus our prayer life in a special way. You might choose to pray for someone who is struggling or in need each day. Or pray a prayer of thanks for someone you are grateful for each day. Commit to a time of prayer each day for these forty days.

And then we are invited to fast. That might mean fasting from a particular food or drink. Maybe that is for one part of each day or for forty days. Or perhaps you will choose to fast from something that distracts you from God or from those around you. Don't bring your phone to the dinner table or to a visit with a friend.

Fasting is a spiritual practice that is meant to sharpen our awareness of what is most important. It can easily feel like a sacrifice or an exercise in self-control but fasting is a tool that helps us pay attention to God and the people all around us.

And finally we are asked to give. As we pray for others and fast from things we normally eat or drink or use in our daily lives, we can't help but become more aware of the needs of others. And so we save during this season to share what we have with those who are without. We use the money we might spend on a latte or a meal out or a nice glass of wine and instead designate those gifts for our neighbor.

As a congregation we give our offerings to ELCA World Hunger to make sure that God's gifts are shared with all people, especially those who are hungry in our community and around the world. You might also consider giving of your time this season in service to another person or go through your closet and donate clothing that you no longer use. Find a way that you can give this season.

As we sing the hymn of the day today and throughout the Lenten season you are invited to come forward to the cross and write down a prayer or something you are fasting from or a way you are giving this season. We will put all of these on the cross as our offering to God. And if you don't wish to come forward today you are also invited to take a piece of paper home with you, there are extras in the Concourse, as a reminder of the invitation this season to pray, fast and give.

Know today God cares about you and loves you, that you are a child of God, and that God is with you on your Lenten journey as you pray, fast and give.

Amen.