

Luke 4:1-13

¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ²where 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.

³The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” ⁴Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’”

⁵Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And 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. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” ⁸Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

⁹Then 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, ¹⁰for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’ ¹¹and On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’” ¹²Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ¹³When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Luke 4:1-13, 2016

That devil is quite a salesman, isn't he?

He starts out with the soft sell.

This strategy appeals to the needs and wants of the prospect, and often times will solve a problem.

The devil sees that Jesus is famished and brings a solution to the problem.

Then the devil tries the impulse buy tactic.

You know what this is; spur of the moment unplanned decision to buy made just before a purchase. These are emotional purchases triggered by seeing the product or exposure to a well crafted promotional message.

Purchases range from small items like chocolate, clothing, and magazines to substantially large items like jewelry, vehicles and works of art,

According to some, about 80% of the time these purchases result in problems such as financial difficulties,

family disapproval, or feelings of guilt or disappointment.

The devil offers Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, glory, power, authority.

All he has to do is worship the devil.

Then comes the hard sell.

The pressure is on. The appeal is made to a person's fears,

greed or vanity to persuade the prospect to make a quick decision.

Here the devil appeals to Jesus' vanity and says, you have nothing to lose here.

There is no risk. God's angels have your back so you can't get hurt.

All along the way the devil makes his appeal to Jesus' weakened state, and by making promises,

when really none of what he promised was his to give.

One does not live buy bread alone.

Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.

Do not put the Lord your God to the test.

Jesus responds to these temptations with the power of scripture and fights off the devil and all his empty promises.

God's word does have power in this story, and power in our lives.

You might be saying right about now, "I don't know all those scripture passages by heart. I can't rely on that, so what do I do?"

That is a good question.

How do you make your own way through the times of testing and temptation when it comes at you?

My guess is you know more scripture in general terms than you think you do.

Love the Lord your God, and your neighbor as yourself.
You have all heard that before and remember it.

Think of the mileage you can get out of this one simple sentence when you are tempted, or while you strive to handle your relationships with others,

try to make a financial decision or some other decision about the priorities in your life.

If nothing else it serves as a reminder about God's love and grace in relationship,

and that God has something to say that may inform you decisions about priorities.

What comes first?

The scriptures, God's word is important to us when considering how we live out our faith in this life, this world, in this community of faith.

This last week I was struggling with some questions coming out of our Congregation meeting last week and God saw fit to place His word before me to help dealing with them.

There were positive things that came out of the meeting, but it was a very different kind of meeting from what we have experienced before.

The positive things I saw was that there was conversation about the matters being decided, and the votes were not real high percentage affirmative,

and I am talking about less than 90 percent affirmative

votes.

That told me a couple of things.

First was the willingness to have discourse about the issues. Some of it was emotional and there were certainly opposing points of view.

These things are all fine if each person is treated with respect and dignity.

The second positive thing I saw was that this congregation is not a rubberstamp for me or our council, and that is really important.

You pay attention, and vote your heart and your conscience.

On the other side I had some concerns.

The meeting became a tad unruly and we as leaders must take the responsibility for that.

Mics were not set up prior to the beginning of the meeting so that better order could be maintained.

But the most disconcerting to me were the reports I got of some feeling like they were verbally accosted after the meeting

by someone who asked them how they voted on an issue and upon learning they disagreed lashed out at them.

Asking the question was inappropriate to begin with given we have written ballots,

but still I don't believe this is how we show respect one another.

I don't know how these people voted and it doesn't matter.

What matters is how we treat one another here.

When I first arrived here governance was a mess and all congregational votes were taken by show of hands. There were no written ballots.

Very quickly I heard about the intimidation many felt to vote a certain way and the fear they had about casting an opposing vote by hand raising.

That is why I insisted that we go to written ballots on all matters of significance to this congregation and ministry.

We have come a long way since those days. Some of you were not here back then to know, but we have changed the culture of this congregation in the last seven years,

and I believe for the better. I don't want to take even the smallest step backwards.

We have become more loving and caring, more respectful. We have united around a call to mission:

To grow in faith,
lead others to faith,
change the lives of people in our community
and impact the world!

This needs to be our focus moving forward.

St. Paul writes in Ephesians 4;

¹I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and

one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all

It doesn't matter which side of the issue you fall on, this Word is for everyone,

and there are admonitions throughout the New Testament about living together that should guide our behavior.

I pray this disrespect is not shown again here.

My second concern is for those who voted against a resolution that passed and their willingness and ability to move forward, stay connected, involved and participating in this ministry God has called us to.

My prayer is that all of us continue to carry out God's mission here at All Saints together.

God knows all our hearts, and God knows His own heart and desire.

We have been given a bold mission and God continues to provide all that is needed to carry it out.

We may not be able to make sense of everything that happens or the way things happen but I pray that you believe,

as I do, that God is in charge here and we are being faithful to His will and purpose in all our decisions.

The passage God laid before me this week is from the WELCA bible study assigned for this month from Philippians the first and second chapters that we studied in Ruth Circle on Thursday.

Let me read in part;

²⁷Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel...¹If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus...”

and he continues with the memorable hymn about Jesus’ humility.

Now, I could choose to go on my one month sabbatical and be terrified about what will happen while I am away,

but I am not going to do that for a couple of reasons.

First, I have faith in God and secondly I have faith in all of you.

I spent some time with this passage from Philippians this week, but it wasn’t until last evening before the 4:30 service that it spoke to me in a different way.

Paul said,

“...whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one Spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of

the gospel...”

I have Paul’s faith about being away.

I know God is here whether I am or not and that is enough.

I know you know these words of God given to shape our lives together, and when temptation comes, if you can’t remember them specifically, you know where to find them.

I know your love for God and your commitment to God and church to make Jesus known in this community and the world.

I know the love you have in your hearts for one another and your ability to work together.

Many times Jesus went off to pray, to rest, to be revitalized for His work. He needed rest, we all do.

I thank you all for the time to have rest and to be renewed and refreshed

so that when I return we can continue in this mission together with new vitality and energy,
in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and savior.