

“Into the Darkness, Finding the Light” **“The Gift of Temptation: Testing and Tasting”**

We have begun the forty day journey Christians call Lent. Traditionally the gospel reading on the temptations of Jesus are read on the first Sunday in Lent. It sets up the 40 days and reminds followers of Jesus that he is human, like each one of us and this tempted Jesus understands our trials and tribulations. The titles of my sermons during this Lenten season will be based on the chapter titles of a book called *Gifts of the Dark Wood*, by Eric Elnes. Lent is a dark time, it invites us into confession and looking at those parts of ourselves that do not reflect the glory and light and love of God. Over the next few weeks, we will enter the darkness in order to find the Light. May this Jesus who goes into the wilderness to be tempted, be a source of strength and help during the coming week.

---Pastor Cindy

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon: **“The Gift of Temptation: Testing and Tasting”**

Prayer for the Week

O Christ, all who call you Savior are pilgrims, following One who never stands still. Your way leads through rough and smooth terrain. Sometimes your path is seldom-used, overgrown, unpopular. Sometimes it is well-walked. But always, as our way unfolds, we need the light which only you can shed upon our path. When we are tempted to detour from your direction or get stuck in dead ends, give us courage and renew our faith that the journey of our lives does indeed lead to the promised land of God's kingdom. Amen. (adapted from a prayer by Diane Karay)

This week's sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, March 6, 2017 Matthew 4: 1

Each year, on the first Sunday in Lent, the story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness is read. Matthew, Mark and Luke each tell the story of those 40 days a bit differently. What they all agree on is that Jesus was called/led into the wilderness by God's spirit to be tempted. Think through your life experiences. Has there been a time you have been driven into the wilderness? Was it by choice? Was it the loss of a job, a relationship or a move? Did you wrestle with temptation, with fear, with hopelessness? How did you find your way and how did you experience God?

Tuesday, March 7, 2017 Matthew 4: 2-4

This first temptation Parker Palmer says is the temptation to "be relevant". People need bread, the world needs bread. Most of us want to "solve problems". The tempter is offering Jesus a way to solve "world" hunger. To be a savior, that makes sure all people are fed. What the tempter offers is a band-aid solution to a deeper issue. Eric Elnes talks about this as the temptation "to do good." Jesus was hungry for more than bread. Jesus was hungry for the confirmation of his calling and a deepening of his spirituality. He would later provide bread for the hungry masses, but he knew the masses also needed a new way to relate to God and each other. Have you ever wrestled with wanting/needing to be relevant or to do good? How do you find the time to be clear about your call? Today, let yourself get a little hungry, by skipping a meal or snack. Feel the physical hunger, then see where it leads you to find out where your spiritual hunger lies.

Wednesday, March 8, 2017 Matthew 4: 5-7

This second temptation is "to be spectacular". Jesus is in the wilderness to clarify and claim his call. The temptation is to show off... to show who he really is and what he can really do. The wilderness allows Jesus to check his motivations and his true purpose. The wilderness allows the space and time to look deep into the soul and see what drives us. Is it ambition? Is it the need to be great and wonderful? Is it the need to prove ourselves? In this temptation, Jesus is choosing not to give in to the need to be validated. How do you find ways, not to validate who you are in your quest to do good and make the world a better place? Say a prayer asking God to help you know you are on the right path.

Thursday, March 9, 2017 Matthew 4: 8-10

The third temptation of Jesus, in Parker Palmer's words is "power, never with or for others, but always power *over* something or someone." The tempter's words, "if you are..." is the needling that causes many of us great pain and uncertainty. If Jesus will just slightly shift his priority and worship the "devil, the tempter" then Jesus will have "power and glory" over all the earth. This is subtle temptation. So we bend the rule here, or just cover up an "oops" there, it can be justified for the greater good. Jesus was clear... he would not worship anyone but God, not for all the power and glory in the world. How are you tempted in this regard? Are there people you seek out to up your social status? What do you consider the places of power? In the government, school system, culture or church? Take a moment to go outside and look at a sunset or sunrise, to look at the stars. Say a prayer of praise to the God who made it all.

Friday, March 10, 2017 Matthew 4: 11

When it is all said and done Jesus is left alone and "the angels came and waited on him." Angels come in many forms. In your wilderness experiences, in those times of temptation, who have been your angels? Have family members walked with you through the valley of the shadow of death? Have friends been there through thick and thin? Today, find one person you could connect with who is in the wilderness and needing an angel. Then thank God for the angels who have ministered to you.