

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
Sunday, February 26th, 2023, Lent I
Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7 Psalm 32 Romans 5:12-19 Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus and the 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness. The words associated with wilderness as a metaphor are darkness, alone, hopelessness, depression.

What is the temptation? To give up and to blame others this can be a chance and opportunity to grow, or we can shut down and find an escape the choice is ours that although our thoughts and actions may not be perfect with help the wilderness can show us a way out and a strong way forward.

This may be an oversimplification, but there are two sides two approaching decisions.

Do our choices connect us to others in the community or cause us to distance ourselves?

This reminds me of:

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

9 Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other, for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted." Luke 18:9-14

Both the Pharisee and the tax collector separated themselves from the community and need to recognize their need for community. In a way, the temptations facing Jesus are asking him to try to be like the Pharisee and try to do things without God's help or the need for community.

It is interesting that Jesus today is facing the same temptations as you and I. Maybe it makes sense as to why this passage is on the first Sunday of Lent. One way of looking at it is that all sinfulness has its roots in the temptation of being different and separate from others. Not needing others or God. The passage today about the 40

days and nights in the wilderness is about the temptation to acquire or use the power to be independent and not needing others and having God in our power and at our beck and call. Having the power to both control God and all others.

You may be thinking I know it's not possible to have power over others so there's no point in thinking that I have that power. There is no temptation in this.

What is there the temptation to withdraw and be alone and stay away from situations where we are not in control? So either we are tempted to control aspects of our lives or we withdraw from those aspects rather than being situations where we are not in control.

Maybe that's where love comes in. Another word and emotion which goes with love is trust. To love or receive the love of God is to trust God. And to love others as an aspect of trust as well. Whether we like it or not to love is in some ways to trust and to give control to the one we love.

The word that comes to mind which brings it all together is belonging. That we have a place where we both give and receive. It is both having some aspects of control and active participation as well as being vulnerable and letting go to others.

The temptation then, is not to trust, not to recognize the love of God or the love of those who do love us. And if we don't trust and love we stay in the wilderness.

So let us learn from the wilderness in our lives that we may learn even in the wilderness to love and trust God others and ourselves.

Amen

The Lord bless you and watch over you,
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you,
the Lord look kindly on you
and give you peace;
and the blessing ...