



3/10/19 Luke 4: 1-13 & Dt. 26: 4-10

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[The psychology of time](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

An old friend of mine Fr. Cletus Wessels taught: "These temptations picture for us the inner struggle of Jesus and they reinforce the reality of Jesus' humanity. Just because he was God's beloved Son does not mean that he could escape the need to re-examine his motives. His was a mission of immense importance, and the greater the mission the greater the need for clarity and purity with respect to that mission. All Christians are called through prayer and the Holy Spirit to discover their identity as daughters and sons of God, to be driven out into the desert, and, through temptation, to clarify and purify their mission within the community. Both Jesus and the Christian community are called to face the powers of evil and then to announce the good news to the poor."

On this first Sunday of Lent we enter our own desert in order to empty ourselves of whatever tempts us to do the right thing for the wrong reason. Let us begin.

Luke 4:1-13

1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. 3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'" 5 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 So if you worship me, it will all be yours." 8 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" 9 The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. 10 For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; 11 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" 12 Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: The temptations of busyness and muchness surround us and threaten our integrity. How do these temptations take on reality in my life?

PRAYER: Beloved son Jesus, your time away to reflect on just what being the beloved son of God really means, reveals all the false ways that could lead you to do the right things for the wrong reasons. But the tempters' methods seem so fail safe and would expedite the process in ways that patient compassion might fail to do. It means that I would have to trust God's process and might never live to see success. Help me as I struggle with which way to go this Lent. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

FULL / HUNGRY: It is said that you shouldn't shop for groceries when you are hungry but when you are full. Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit when he entered the desert. Later we find him hungry and most prone to 'impulse buying'.

How does Jesus resist his 'natural' instinct to fill his emptiness? How can scripture study help you to do the same?

LED: The word led can be used to indicate that someone is following the directions or orders of someone in charge as a general leads an army. Luke and Matthew use the word led and Mark uses the word drove when telling the story of the temptation in the desert. *Compare the difference in the times when I was driven to do something, to the times when I was led to do something. What were the differences in those experiences? Can this help to expand this passage?*

40 DAYS: Forty days in scripture usually signifies a period of time for a significant change to take place, yet not too long so as to let the momentum flag. See: Gn. 7:4, 17; 8:6; 50:3; Ex. 24:18; 34:28; Nu. 13:25; 14:43; Dt. 9:9,11,18,25; 10:10; I Sam. 17:16; I Kg. 19:8; Ezek. 4:6; Jonah 3:4; Mt. 4:2; Mk. 1:13; Lk. 4:2; Acts 1:3.

Remember a '40 days' time in my life when I took the leap and made the required growth? Compare that with a memory where I went beyond the '40 days' and lost the chance to make the offered growth. With hindsight, what were the differences in those memories.

TEMPTED / TEST: To tempt is to entice or allure someone to do something often regarded as unwise, wrong, or immoral. To test is the trial of the quality of something. In our text, Jesus is tempted, and warns not to put God to the test.

Examine these two words and how Luke uses them to show how Jesus responded to his situation. He faced the temptations relying on the quality of God's promise. How does this text me you to do the same?

DEVIL / ANGELS: In scripture the powers of good and evil were personified in beings named angels and devils. Jesus was confronting the chaotic but doing it with God's word to guide him.

The mystery of the powers of good and evil always seems to go beyond any rational explanations. How do I confront the chaos in the world today? How does my faith help me to rise above the temptation to lose hope that good is stronger than evil?

IF: If is a tiny word, only two letters. The power of evil uses this tiny word like a crowbar to pry open any indecision that Jesus might have about the nature of his ministry to the world.

Have I ever had someone use the "if" word with me? What happened? Was I tempted to put aside a value in order to accomplish an immediate goal?

IT IS WRITTEN: Jesus goes to his scriptures to meet the challenge of the world's powers. He goes from 'common sense' to 'uncommon sense' by relying on God's word.

Everyone thought they knew God through their reading of the scriptures. Jesus goes to the same words and finds a bigger understanding of who God is. It was his word against theirs. Have I ever had to reach to an 'uncommon sense' understanding of God because of Jesus?

HIGH PLACE / JERUSALEM: Humanity has always looked to the high places, where power resides, in order to receive their power and strength.

Where do I look for power? Have I ever looked for power in the wrong place? If so, what did I learn from that experience?



KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD: In the world of space and time, where we live in the apparent dualism of this or that, now or then, we seem at time to be trapped by polarizing choices. This is the realm where the limits of space and time rule and the "Satan" has control.

How does Jesus transcend the limits of space and time in his struggle with temptation? What can I learn from his method? How does belief in the Resurrection help me be free from those apparent limits?

AUTHORITY / SPLENDOR: We often confuse authority with splendor. We elevate it to 'divine' realms and surround it with the glory of worship.

Why does splendor have this appeal? Who decides for me what has authority? How did Jesus make his decision?

WORSHIP: Worship is that which belongs to only God. Anyone or anything less is considered idolatry.

Is there anything in my life that I have permitted to have that which only belongs to God?

TEMPLE: There is a saying in a Jewish text that says: "When the King, the Messiah, reveals himself, he will come and stand on the roof of the Temple".

If someone told me that the Messiah was in our midst today where would I expect to find this person? What place would be most convincing to me?

THEY WILL LIFT YOU UP: There are many references to being lifted up in the bible. Is. 40:9; 49:22; Jer. 50:2; Jn. 3:14; 8:28; 12:32. Jesus kept in mind just who was the one doing the lifting, and this protected him from falling for the temptations offered him by the one who claimed power over the world.

What in this study process has lifted up a new understanding of God, so as to keep you from being hurt?

OPPORTUNE TIME: Often, when we fail to succeed in convincing someone of something, we know enough to pause in our pursuit so as to come back later when we feel that the person is more vulnerable to our line of thought.

Have I ever encountered something that my current level of faith was unable to sustain me? How did I grow a faith big enough to persevere?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Lk. 4:1-13 // Mt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12f; Lk. 4:4 // Mt. 4:4; Dt. 8:3; Lk. 4:6 // Jer. 27:5; Rev. 13:2ff; Lk. 4:8 // Mt. 4:10; Dt. 6:13; Lk. 4:10-22 // Mt. 4:6; Ps. 91: 11-12; Lk. 4:12 // Mt. 4:7; Dt. 6:16; Lk. 4:13 // Jn. 13:2,27; See also; Mt. 4:11; Mk. 1:13; Jn. 1:51;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Dt. 26:4-10; [Ps. 91:1-2, 10-15](#); Rom. 10: 8-13; Lk. 4:1-13;
Revised Common Lectionary: Dt. 26:1-11; [Ps. 91:1-2, 9-16](#); Rom. 10: 8-13; Lk. 4:1-13;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

The desert of today is not a topography of sand and rocks and aridity, it is the familiar landscape of common ideas and tastes that (on the surface) seem harmless. Therein lies the danger. In our modern cultural desert we have reduced temptation to banal images and sensations centered mostly around sex and power. We've turned it into entertainment and advertisement. Temptation is more subtle and dangerous than this. Ignorance of what is truly happening, and what is at stake, is the downfall of many. Dr. David Hirstius

In 1 Chronicles 21: 1 Satan is the accuser and is a member of the heavenly court whose role is to test the righteous.

Mary C. Ferris in her **GREAT IMPOSTOR** says: I put off what I have to do / with just another cup, / and all those postponed duties / my how they add up. / Easy to say, "Get behind me," / if he came in horns and tail. / Disguised as just another cup, / his tactics seldom fail.

For it is not an external enemy whom we have to dread . . . an internal warfare is daily waged by us: and if we are victorious in this, all external things will be made weak, and everything will be made peaceful and subdued for the disciple of Christ. We shall have no external enemy to fear, if what is within is overcome and subdued to the spirit. - John Cassian [5th C.], *The Institutes* -
You see Jesus' faith tested in the temptation scenes in [Luke 4:1-13](#). The basic question, put before him three times, is this: "Is God to be trusted?" That is the great question that the human race is asking at the most basic level. We hear Jesus ever more resoundingly answer, "Yes, God is on your side. Yes, God is more for you than you are for yourself." Richard Rohr

We are susceptible to heretical teachings because, in one form or another, they nurture and reflect the way that we would have it be, rather than the way God has provided, which is infinitely better for us. As they lead us into the blind alleys of self-indulgence and escape from life, heresies pander to the most unworthy tendencies of the human heart. ... C. FitzSimons Allison (b. 1927),

Our Adversary majors in three things: noise, hurry and crowds. If he can keep us engaged in "muchness" and "manyness," he will rest satisfied. ... Richard J. Foster

As one who strives to cast out an evil thought gains a great reward in heaven, so he who does not consent to good inspirations runs a grave risk of falling into great evils. Ignatius Loyola

Silencing a demon is as easy as letting him finish, (he will finish), and then listening to the silence that follows, (it will come) . . . and waiting. The promise of Christ is true. There, do you see? The little bugger's gone, and I hardly lifted a finger. Father Raphael

Paul Tournier in *The Violence Within* identifies and describes an impulse to exercise power on the part of all those in the helping professions. This urge, if unrecognized and therefore unresisted, leads to the unconscious practice of violence on the psyches of others. A charismatic gift can easily be subverted into an unconscious exercise of violence in the inebriation of power. This dynamic has been depicted dramatically in Elmer Gantry and Mar-Jo and played out in real life by Jim Jones of Guyana and other contemporary counterparts whose persona is charismatic religious leader or guru. Their shadow, once called into play, can work havoc in the lives of others. Pg. 31. Jungblut, John R. *The Gentle Art of Spiritual Guidance*, Amity, NY. Anaity House. 1988.

Just as the gardener who does not weed his garden chokes his vegetables, so the intellect that does not purify its thoughts is wasting its efforts. St. Thalassios the Libyan

This is exactly what Jesus does in the forty days in the wilderness: He goes to a place of emptiness. And it says: He fasted for forty days, meaning, he made himself empty. He stared down the demon who told him, "You have to be successful." And he answered, "No, I don't need that." When he stood on the pinnacle of the temple, he stared down the second who told him, "You have to be on the right religious track." This demon could quote Scripture! And Jesus said: "Get lost. I don't need this game." Finally he met the demon who told him, "You can do the will of God with the tools of power." But the price of power is falling down before Satan.

We all have to start from the assumption that our path too leads into the wilderness and that we have to look exactly the same three demons in the eye: the need to be successful, the need to be righteous or religious, and the need to have power and get everything under control. Until we have stared down these three demons within us, there is no possibility of getting out of the wilderness and proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Otherwise we'll always be proclaiming our own kingdom. We use the Gospel to enthrone ourselves, and then the inner and the outer ways split apart. God calls all of you to take the path of the inner truth - and that means taking responsibility for everything that's in you: for what pleases you and for what you're ashamed of, for the rich person inside you and for the poor one. Francis of Assisi called this, "loving the leper within us." If you learn to love the poor one within you, you'll discover that you have room to have compassion "outside" too, that there's room in you for others, for those who are different from you, for the least among your brothers and sisters. Pgs. 169-70. Rohr, Richard. *Simplicity: the Art of Living*, NY, Crossroad. 1992.

In an article titled East Meets West: The Uncanny Parallels in the Lives of Buddha and Jesus Bible Review October 1999 pages 18ff) we find the Buddha (6B.C.) saying: “Then Mara the evil one drew near to him and said:...”If the Exalted One (Buddha) were to wish the Himalayas, king of the mountains, to be gold, he might determine it to be so, and the mountains would become a mass of gold.” The Exalted One responded: “Were the mountains all of shimmering gold, it would still not be enough for one man’s wants. He that has seen suffering – how should that man succumb to desires?” (Samyutta Nikaya 4.2.10)

The numerical value of the letters in the word “Satan” (Hebrew: *Hasatan*) is 364, the total number of days in a year, less one. Satan can accuse the Jewish people and lead them astray every day of the year, with the exception of Yom Kippur. On that day the Holy One, praised be He, says to Satan, “You have no power over them today. Nevertheless, to and see what they are doing.” When Satan finds them all fasting and praying, clothed in white garments like angels, he immediately returns in shame and confusion. The Holy One ask him, “How are my children?” Satan answers, “They are like angels, and I have no power over them.” Thereupon the Holy One, praised by He, puts Satan in chains and declares to His people, “I have forgiven you. Pg. 196
Hertzberg, Arthur. Judaism. NY. Touchstone Books. 1991.

The number 40 holds symbolic connotation of transitional and interim periods of time. The designated periods are not only situated between events, but serve a transformational function. Sacred time is marked by beginning and ending points within which the individual or community is to pass through and be recreated by significant change.
Carson, Timothy L. Liminal Reality and Transformational Power_NY_ Univ. Press of Amer. 1997. Pg. 105.

The Mediterranean world lives by a deeply rooted belief in spirits who exist in numbers too huge to count and whose major pastime is interfering capriciously in daily human life. Individual Mediterranean cultures, like the Italian or Spanish, rely upon a broad range of amulets, formulas, or other symbols toward off attacks from spirits.

In this world blue is a favorite color believed to be an especially powerful protection against spirits. People there paint the window frames and doorjambs blue or wear blue ribbons or clothes precisely for this reason. Others wear specific medals, charms, amulets, which are guaranteed to impede attacks. Pilch, John J. The Cultural World of Jesus-Cycle C_The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN. 1997. Page 49.

In our tradition of faith, in our culture and in our Scripture, we have spoken mythologically about the struggle between good and evil. Creation itself is presented as a confrontation between good and evil, in which God does not create the world out of nothing but out of chaos by overcoming it. In the creative process, Adam and Eve are tested by the devil, a personification of the presence of evil. This same devil is the personification of evil and envy of the people that Jesus must confront in the temptations as presented in the synoptic gospels before he enters upon his mission.

Mythology is an affirmation of faith. Our mythology about angels, good and bad, was in its origin an affirmation about our real involvement in the struggle between good and evil. Good and evil are real and will always be with us. Mythology about angels has been an effective way to affirm our involvement in the struggle and to promise victory.
Parr, Raymond. Process Person Presence_Thomas More Press, Chicago.1990. Page 214.

The three famous temptations – that Jesus turn stone into bread, that he worship Satan in return for the kingship of the world, and that he cast himself from a pinnacle and be saved by angels – represent the three universal temptations of greed, power, and pride, answerable only by the three virtues of poverty, obedience, and humility. We are all heirs to these ancient temptations; we all must enter the desert – a sojourn that may last a lifetime, as it did for Antony, and that may demand more struggles and suffering than we bargained for. Zaleski, Philip. The Night Journey of Nicodemus. Parabola. Winter 1998. Pages 61ff.

Henri Nouwen sees Jesus’ three temptations: Be useful. Be important. Be powerful. Useful, important, and powerful – are not these the attributes that still tempt every one of us seek to do good in the world? Yet the saints and sages teach us to offer our kindness humbly, invisibly, quietly. Jesus did not seek worldly power or influence. He spent his time with unknown, disliked people. Pg. 174.
Muller, Wayne. Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest. NY. Bantam Books.1999.

If, when caught up in the seductive power of dark desire, we can invoke our empathy and compassion for those who will be harmed by our answering its call, perhaps we may be able to resist its dangerous consequences. Pg. 43
Mickelson, Jane L. The Dark Side of Desire. Parabola, Fall 2019

The place traditionally associated with Jesus’ retreat was among the most forbidding in the Judean desert. The sun scorched the barren terrain, vultures circled overhead, venomous snakes, scorpions and centipedes sought shade beneath or in rock crevices and at the time of Mark writing wild beasts roamed - lions, hyena, wild boars and jackals. At night, the temperature drops to an unremorseful cold. The ancients believed the desert to be the abode of evil spirits and it was not unusual for holy men to go there to fast, pray, do battle with their own inner daemons and find new strength in the Spirit. Beryl Cates.

SUGGESTED READING:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com
Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle C 2012.. Pgs. 50-54..