Talk for family service 6.3.22

Luke 4 v 1 -13

We are now in the period of Lent - that special time of preparation for Easter and the celebration of the risen Lord. Today we are talking about temptation. I think we all believe we know what temptation is all about but I looked it up in a dictionary and it says – inducement to do evil. So then I looked up inducement which said persuade to do wrong, wanting someone to do something bad. So the reading today is all about being told by someone to do something that you know is bad and making sure you don’t do it. Like the little boy in the shop who was standing near an open box of biscuits. “Now than young man” said the shopkeeper as he approached the boy “What are you up to?” “Nothing” replied the little boy “Nothing, Well it looks to me that you were trying to take a biscuit” “You’re wrong” said the little boy “I’m trying not to!”

We understand that temptation leads to trouble. Jesus was tempted as he was human. Jesus had to undo the work of Adam. Adam had been created perfect but gave into temptation and passed sin onto the human race. Jesus by contrast resisted Satan and his victory offers salvation to all of Adam’s descendants.

Satan may tempt us to doubt Christ’s true identity. He knows that once we begin to question whether or not Jesus is God it’s far easier to get us to do what he wants. Times of questioning can help us to sort out our beliefs and strengthen our faith but these times can also be dangerous. If you are dealing with doubt realise that you are especially vulnerable to temptation. Even as you search for answers protect yourself by meditating on the unshakable truths of God’s word.

**Rock**

Jesus was very hungry as he had been fasting while he talked to God about his work and what he had to do. Sometimes what we are tempted to do is not wrong in itself. Turning stones into bread was not necessarily bad but the reason behind it was. The devil was trying to get Jesus to take a short cut, to solve an immediate problem at the expense of his long term goals, to seek comfort at the sacrifice of his discipline. Jesus was in the desert to fast he was experiencing things as a human and therefore it would be wrong to use his divine power to this end. Many people sin by attempting to fulfil legitimate desires outside of God’s will or ahead of his timetable. We need to ask ‘Is the Holy Spirit leading me to do this or is Satan trying to get me off track? If we give into the devil and wrongly use our strengths we become proud and self – reliant. Trusting in our own powers we feel little need of God. To avoid this we must realise that all our strengths are God’s gift to us and we must use them in his service.

**Atlas**

Next in the scripture, the devil shows Jesus the world – and says it is his to give. He will give it to Jesus if he will worship him. What he is offering him is to take the easy and least painful trip. Jesus came to the earth to take back the whole world. So here is the fast and easy way. No cross no pain. He can have it without working for it without having to struggle and work at the process.

We are offered Satan’s world and all of its ease. If we will accept the world as is and we don’t try to make it better. Some will just avoid the difficulties because the world says it is ok to be selfish and self-centered. Some will spend their money to buy as much comfort and pleasure as possible. They never notice the suffering of the world and don’t worry who will care for the hurting and abused. Some people will marry and divorce just to be happy not realizing that it takes work for a relationship. The devil’s world says you must always be happy and that is what he says he offers.

TV advertisers love to tell you what you need. Foods, exercise and diet products, how to buy real estate. Advertisers are always trying to fill the questions inside of us that say that we need to be better, thinner, richer and if we use our credit card the answer can solve the hunger with rush shipping.

The devil is the advertiser to our spiritual hunger, pointing out the green pastures over there someplace. You have the power to heal yourself. Just take control and make decisions totally for yourself. You are empowered and a free thinker. You are in charge and don’t need to trust God. The majority of temptations in our lives will only ask you to make the simple innocent looking decisions that are no big deal.

You can do it, it’s no big deal. No one will know. You need to. It is so, so easy as this example demonstrates.

There was a poor village vicar who was mad at his wife for always spending money. He angrily confronted his wife with the receipt for a £250 dress she had bought. “How could you do this to me!” he exclaimed. “I don’t know,” she wailed, “I was standing in the department store looking at the dresses. Then I found myself trying it on. It was like the Devil was whispering to me, “Gee, you look great in this dress. You should buy it.”

“Well,” the pastor persisted, “You should know how to deal with the Devil! Just tell him, ‘Get behind me, Satan!”

“I did,” the wife retorted, “but then he said, ‘It looks great from back here, too.’”

**First Aid Kit**

The devil wanted to test Jesus by jumping off a high point of the temple because God would save him. He even quoted the bible to say the angels would protect him and keep him safe. Jesus who knew the scriptures so well replied that yes it did say that but it also said one should not put God to the test.

The devil knows when to tempt you, not just a generic temptation. He knows the best place, the best time and the most tempting thing on offer. You may not be able to resist because he knows your weaknesses. If a waitress asks me if I want a desert I may be able to resist, if she offers me a dessert menu it may be trickier but if she wheels a trolley to my table with all the delicious desserts on then I do not stand a chance…

I close with a story of someone who always turned to the Lord.

As I faced my Maker at the last judgment, I knelt before the Lord along with all the other souls.

Before each of us laid our lives like the squares of a quilt in many piles. An Angel sat before each of us sewing our quilt squares together into a tapestry that is our life.

But as my angel took each piece of cloth off the pile, I noticed how ragged and empty each of my squares was. They were filled with giant holes. Each square was labeled with a part of my life that had been difficult, the challenges and temptations I was faced with in everyday life. I saw hardships that I endured, which were the largest holes of all. I glanced around me. Not many others had such squares. Other than a few holes here and there, the other tapestries were filled with rich color and the bright hues of worldly fortune. I gazed upon my own life and was disheartened.

My angel was sewing the ragged pieces of cloth together, threadbare and empty, like binding air.

Finally the time came when each life was to be displayed, held up to the light, the scrutiny of truth. The others rose, each in turn, holding up their tapestries. So filled their lives had been. My angel looked upon me, and nodded for me to rise. My gaze dropped to the ground in shame. I hadn't had all the earthly fortunes. I had love in my life, and laughter. But there had also been trials of illness, and death, and false accusations that took from me my world, as I knew it. I had to start over many times. I often struggled with the temptation to quit, only to somehow muster the strength to pick up and begin again. I spent many nights on my knees in prayer, asking for help and guidance in my life. I had often been held up to ridicule, which I endured painfully, each time offering it up to the Father in hopes that I would not melt within my skin beneath the judgmental gaze of those who unfairly judged me.

 And now, I had to face the truth. My life was what it was, and I had to accept it for what it was.

I rose and slowly lifted the combined squares of my life to the light. An awe-filled gasp filled the air. I gazed around at the others who stared at me with wide eyes.

Then, I looked upon the tapestry before me. Light flooded the many holes, creating an image, the face of Christ. Then our Lord stood before me, with warmth and love in His eyes. He said, "Every time you gave over your life to Me, it became My life, My hardships, and My struggles. Each point of light in your life is when you stepped aside and let Me shine through, until there was more of Me than there was of you."

May all our quilts be threadbare and worn, allowing Christ to shine through.