

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, March 16, 2021
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“Man Does Not Live by Bread Alone”

READING: Matthew 4:1-4 – Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Exodus 16:2-4 – In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.” Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.”

We don’t *really* get hungry very often. I mean REALLY hungry, like three days without eats hungry. We get a little rumble in our bellies and we already run to the snack drawer or our secret stash of goodies. The last time I remember being really hungry was a day spent helping someone move from one home to another. We had been at heavy labor with lots of stairs for five hours when I suddenly realized that I was HUNGRY! At that moment almost anything would have been satisfying, even if it was not one of my favorite foods.

Jesus knew hunger after forty days and forty nights of fasting in the desert. Even liver and Lima beans would have tasted good just then. (Those are a couple of my least favorite foods!) And the devil knew it! He comes to Jesus with just a mild suggestion that Jesus has the power to turn those stones into wonderful warm and delicious bread. No big deal, right? Except Jesus immediately sees through the rouse. Using his powers for his own pleasure will be the slippery slope to more of the same. He could start with bread and end up with a swimming pool and golden tableware.

You know why Jesus is led into the desert to be tempted in the first place? Because Jesus is the True Israel, Israel reduced to One. He will succeed where God’s chosen people had so miserably failed. He spends 40 days in the wilderness because Israel spent 40 years. He is tempted with hunger because Israel was tempted with hunger, and Israel rebelled and complained and whined about their food over and over and over. Rather than trust the One who had brought them out of Egypt with his strong right arm, they doubted God’s motives and overlooked God’s providence. Where Israel failed, Jesus must prevail. He has to do it well and right – for ALL of US.

That’s right, not just to redeem Israel, but us as well. We are not so different from those whiners in the desert. How often do we pity ourselves because our house isn’t as big as someone we know? How often do we whine, “Chicken again? We just had that last week!”

How often have we felt we should have had better, bigger, more, or sooner? We who are “one-percenters” compared to much of the rest of the world. We sometimes doubt our Lord’s providence, too. Why do I have cancer? Why does my loved one have this disease? Why has God laid this upon me? What did I do to deserve this?

No, Jesus goes out into that desert to be tempted for ALL of us, to be the perfect Son of God who, as Hebrews says, “...was tempted in every way that we are, yet without sinning.” Jesus knew hunger, but his hunger and thirst for righteousness, his obedience and trust of his heavenly Father, and his willingness to suffer all, even death on a cross, for us enabled him to say to the devil, “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

We’re going to visit the Temptation of Christ for the next couple of weeks. At the end of the temptations St. Luke tells us, “When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.” Such a moment will come to Jesus again, on the cross, when he hears the very same words that Satan did in our text today, “If you are the Son of God...” “If you are...”: words that are often directed our way as well. “If you are a child of God, why...?” We lean not on our own strength, but we seek out the Lord’s by Word and Sacrament so the devil will flee from us, too. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

1) **WEDNESDAY LENTEN SERVICES:** Our series is entitled, “The Road to Perdition”. We will walk beside Jesus as he experiences the various events that lead to the Judgement Hall and the Cross on Good Friday. This week we’ll see Mary anoint his feet, and we’ll be humbled as Jesus washes the Disciples’ feet on March 24. Join us on Wednesdays at 7:00 PM.

2) **HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES:** Maundy Thursday is April 1 and Good Friday on April 2, both of them at 7:00 PM with Communion on Thursday and the Service of Darkness and the Burial of the Christ Banner on Friday. Easter this year will mark a return to normalcy with Sunrise Service at 6:30 and Divine Services with Communion at 8:00 and 10:30. Consider attending the services in person, especially if you’ve had your vaccinations.