

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, March 30, 2021
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“DO NOT TEST THE LORD”

READING: Luke 4:9-13 – 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. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” Jesus answered, “It says: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Numbers 16:1-5a - Korah son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and certain Reubenites – Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth – became insolent and rose up against Moses. With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council. They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, “You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the Lord’s assembly?” When Moses heard this, he fell facedown. Then he said to Korah and all his followers: “In the morning the Lord will show who belongs to him and who is holy...”

The past two weeks you and I have looked at the Temptations of Christ and have reflected upon Jesus’ re-enactment of Israel’s 40-year journey in the Wilderness. The first temptation revolved around hunger and trusting in God’s providence. The second one involved earthly power and splendor at the expense of being led by selfishness that leads to the devil. This week Satan brings another powerful temptation to Jesus, and this time it is he, the devil, who first quotes Scripture. (He knows the whole Book, word for word, and has often misled Christians by putting a little devilish twist to God’s word.) He’s got yet one more trap to set before Jesus.

This one is well known in our nation, in the past, in the present, and in the future. This one is the temptation of popularity, the “WOW Factor!” Satan takes Jesus up on the pinnacle of the Temple in Jerusalem itself. Then he suggests that Jesus jump off! After all, the Scriptures seem to promise that God will keep you from harm by surrounding you with his angels “...to guard you in all your ways!” Just think of the sensation Jesus would make by plummeting down to the Court of the Priests while the men of Israel stand gaping! And just before hitting the earth, a gentle two-point landing is achieved, thanks to the efforts of the angels. What glory! What fame! What notoriety to be gained! And all with God’s blessing! No need to walk the way of the Cross. No need to suffer agonies untold. No need to suffer the wrath of his Father when a straightforward approach can make Israel stand up and take notice of the Christ. How tempting!

You’ll remember that for the past two weeks I have pointed out how Jesus’ temptations in the desert were a re-enactment of Israel’s desert journey of 40 years. Jesus is the True Israel, Israel reduced to One, the perfect Son who is always obedient to his Father. The 3rd

Temptation of Christ reminds us of Korah's Rebellion in the Old Testament. He and his cronies are sick and tired of Moses and his commandments and requirements and sacrifices and his leadership. They feel that they, too, know God's ways and stand justified before him. Moses knows trouble when he hears it. He knows that this rebellion is not against him, but against the Lord Almighty. He senses also that God will bring a terrible judgement upon Korah and all who follow him. They think leading Israel is all about glory and fame and fortune. Further on Moses says to the Lord, "I have not taken so much as a donkey from them, nor have I wronged any of them."

We are also tempted to think of our own reputations, our own social acceptance, our own popularity when following the Lord's will is in the balance. Our teens are tempted to do the drugs, drink the liquor, flaunt their bodies in order to be noticed, accepted, or thought to be the latest word for "cool". Our working men and women are tempted to cheat their employers, join in the gossip, disdain those different from themselves, or rob the IRS at this time of the year, all in the effort to be "one of the gang" or to elevate themselves in the eyes of like-thinkers.

That is not Jesus' way. His response to Satan is one that warns us as well. To misuse the Scriptures or to seek our own popularity at God's expense will not sustain us. It will lead us into more trouble and less joy. And at its extreme, it can take us out of God's camp and into the dwelling of the devil. So we make it our goal to please him and to serve him only. Obedient as we can be and confessing our transgressions when we fail, we desire to be the ones "...who belong to him and are holy." For Jesus' sake, Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

1) 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.