

Discipleship in the Lectionary – 03/06/2022



A look at the week's lectionary through the lens of discipleship and disciple-making.

First Sunday in Lent

Revised Common Lectionary Year C

Sunday, March 6th

Luke 4:1-13

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Jesus the New Adam withstands temptation

On the First Sunday in Lent, the Gospel in each lectionary cycle is an account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. Each of these synoptic Gospel accounts provides a unique perspective. In Luke, we are invited to consider Jesus as the New Adam. The temptation narrative immediately follows Jesus' genealogy where Jesus' lineage is traced all the way back to Adam. Adam is given the title, son of God, the same title God bestowed on Jesus after His baptism. It is through overcoming such temptation that Jesus completes His final preparation for His ministry to reconcile the fallen world. Where Adam and Eve succumbed to temptation and were expelled from the presence of God, Jesus' resistance to temptation and holding fast to His baptismal calling begins the restoration of life in the presence of God. During this time, we too are invited to consider our own baptismal calling and our ability to flee from the daily temptations we face through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 4:1-13 Commentary

In terms of context, the text follows Jesus' baptism where the Holy Spirit, in bodily form like a dove, descended upon Him (3:21,22). Following this scene and immediately before the text is Jesus' genealogy (3:23-38). Here Jesus' lineage is traced back to Adam, the son of God (3:38), the same title Jesus was called by God during His baptism (3:21,22). The narrative picks up again at 4:1 when Jesus returns from the Jordan.

*¹ And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness
² for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.*

We read how the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness for 40 days. In the Markan parallel, the Spirit *immediately drove him out* into the wilderness (Mark 1:12). The word Mark used is *ekballo* - to drive out or cast out. The imagery here is of action. Perhaps this is more suitable to a Roman audience. In Luke's narrative a gentler word used: "led" (Greek *agō*). Here the imagery is of cooperation. In the NASB this is rendered as *Jesus was led around by the Spirit (or under the influence of the Spirit)*. This paints the picture of the Spirit continuing to lead and guide Jesus for the whole 40 days. He was not left alone to face His testing.

In the West, the definition of being hungry for the vast majority of us is missing a meal or being late for a meal. We can only imagine the state of craving and vulnerability Jesus must have been in after His time in the wilderness.

³ *The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."* ⁴ *And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"*

Connecting with the Adam imagery, Jesus was first tempted with something to eat. There is more here though. Jesus was being tempted to use His power as the Son of God to take care of His own needs rather than for the purposes of the ministry He had been called to. Some commentators make the connection here with the scene during the crucifixion where Jesus tempted by an array of onlookers to save Himself (Luke 23:35-39). Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3.

⁵ *And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time,* ⁶ *and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. ⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."* ⁸ *And Jesus answered him, "It is written,*

"You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve."

The second temptation is to use the authority given to Jesus to accomplish His ministry for His own worldly glory. Many were looking to Jesus as the worldly Messiah - one who had political, and military might. A worldly leader that would seek his own glory and not the glory of God. Jesus rejects this type of kingdom. Jesus responds by citing Deuteronomy 6:13.

⁹ *And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰ for it is written,*

"He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,'

¹¹ *and*

"On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone."

¹² *And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ¹³ And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.*

The final temptation described by Luke is for Jesus to jump off the pinnacle of the temple and He would land unharmed. This act is suggested by some commentators to be a temptation to seek fame and popularity. This spectacle would have caused awe and wonder among the witnesses and made Jesus mightily popular. This is in stark contrast to the hidden glory of the cross to which Jesus was called to. Jesus responds by citing Deuteronomy 6:16.

The text indicates that these three temptations may not have been three isolated events. We read when the devil had ended every temptation he then departed from Jesus - until an opportune time. Temptation was never far from Jesus during His earthly ministry.

Reflections

We too are led by the Holy Spirit and empowered to resist the temptations that threaten to prevent us from fulfilling our baptismal calling. While we cannot be tempted in the same way as Jesus, we do face parallel temptations in our lives to the three temptations of Jesus recorded in Luke:

- (1) Where Jesus was tempted to turn stones into bread, we are constantly tempted to put our own needs and wants first over the needs of others. We are tempted to use the spiritual gifts we have been given for our own worldly benefit. We are constantly being tempted by the comforts and materialism of the world. Ironically, in the West the most significant health risks we face result directly or indirectly from our abundances. Today, we are more likely to rely on our own ability to supply our needs rather than placing our trust in God to provide our daily bread.
- (2) Where Jesus was tempted to use His power for worldly glory, we too are often tempted to get caught up in our worldly status. Whatever we accomplish is through God's grace and according to His sovereign will. Basking in our own success leads to pride and robbing God of His rightful glory.
- (3) Where Jesus was tempted by fame and popularity, we too are similarly tempted. We are tempted to remain silent rather than speak out and be considered unpopular. We face the temptation to conform the church to the world to avoid offending people. We are tempted to turn the church into a spectacle that appeals to the tastes of the consumer. We are faced with the temptation to compromise the truth to get along with the fallen world.

The season of Lent is a time of prayer, fasting and self-examination in preparation for the celebration of the resurrection of our Lord at Easter. It is a time where we give things up for God, a time of increased devotion, prayer and make space for Him to work more directly in our lives. During Lent we can observe such Lenten disciplines which will draw us into repentance and empower us to flee our temptations as we journey towards the cross and the empty tomb.

