

“Call on God for answers;
for God is with you in times of trouble.
God rescues and honors you.” AMEN!

I am one of those messy desk people.

Oh yeah, I think I know where everything is
but it can get to the point
where I am not so sure.

And to further impress you,
one of my high tech systems of organizing is
to use the little yellow sticky notes. :-)

I can see you're impressed!

These notes act as reminders to call someone,
as todo lists, or to jot down thoughts or
quotes that are particularly meaningful.

A few of these little sticky notes,
the ones with meaningful quotes,
can even travel with me
long after they've lost their “sticky.” :-)

There was one I came across this week
that I wrote down when we
were living in Panama City.

Since that is pretty unique and
since it fits with today, I'd like
to share it with you.

The note says:
Almost everything will work again
if you unplug it for a few minutes,
including you. :-)

Isn't that a good one?

“Almost everything will work again
if you unplug it for a few minutes,
including you.”

Lent is like that for me.

It's cathartic and cleansing.

Lent gives us long moment to unplug ourselves.

One might do this by making a
Lenten commitment to give something up,
or let something go.

And one might find a Lenten commitment
to intentionally slow down.

To unplug and participate in breathing exercises
or become more meditative.

These are disciplines that are
often lost in our “go,go,go” culture.

Lent pushes back against our society’s
false teachings that more is better and
our culture’s urging that the
glow of a cell phone or computer screen
is really warm enough for us.

Lent pushes back and reminds us
that simplicity, awareness, and
persistence are the way.

Lent draws us to unplug and connect instead
to the real source of energy and light.

Unplug ourselves in order to connect with people
in real presence to find that in those
connections there is a mutual sharing
of energy flowing back and forth.

You know when you’re in the right connection
when the other person is seeking

to understand you and

you are seeking to understand them without
concern of what is going to be said next.

It's sounds easy but it is not.

A conversation where even silence is welcomed. (Pause)

I believe this to be a good way to describe
being filled with the Holy Spirit.

In those moments of intimate connection
one becomes filled with the Holy Spirit and
even transmits her with calm presence.

Gone is the temptation to argue or prove anything
but there is a presence that recognizes that
God is here and God's presence is good. (Pause)

After Jesus was baptized we are told that he
was filled with the Holy Spirit.

In Luke, and the author's
companion the Book of Acts,
the "Spirit fills people and leads them
into trials, uncertainties,
and wildernesses."

That has always struck me.

That Jesus was filled and that the same Holy Spirit led him into the wilderness.

It was in that time of separation where Jesus came under duress and was tempted or tested by the devil.

In verse 2, we find that the devil comes after Jesus' lengthy time of fasting so at his weakest moment.

It looks like an opportune time for the devil to try to move Jesus to deter from his mission and take the easy way out.

It was the perfect time for the devil to test Jesus' mettle.

That is, to see if Jesus can cope well with difficulties and face situations that are demanding in resilient ways.

So the devil began first with tempting Jesus to satisfy his hunger.

“Make food for yourself, Jesus.”

Use your power to get the meal you deserve.

The devil knew it was what Caesar did.

Caesar called himself “son of god” and thus self-claimed the authority to take what he desired.

It is what people in power sometimes believe they can do.

Jesus passed the first temptation by staying calm and replying with scripture from the Torah.

Essentially stating that “a human’s life is more important than the body’s cravings.”

We need food but food is not the sole vehicle to our well-being.

Humans need to lean into the Spirit of God and rely on God for survival.

The next temptation or test from the devil was to claim the power God had given to Him.

“Name it and claim it, Jesus.”

The temptation of having power is a hard one

to turn down.

It is not one that is only relegated to Jesus, only.

Clergy, politicians, middle & upper managers,
big brothers and sisters, school bullies,
all of us, are tempted by the lure of
having power over someone or
something else.

Jesus responded, “Worship and serve only God.”

At first it feels disconnected from
the temptation for power but
at closer inspection we find Jesus’ reply
to be spot on.

Achieving fame and power by becoming
a servant of the devil is a cost that is too high.

For it leads us to ignore God and pay ultimate prices
for a temporary achievements that will,
in the end, make us come to believe
that we are gods.

Jesus passed the second test,
“Worship and serve only God.”

Finally, the devil gave one more pitch to Jesus.

He denied making food for himself and
he'd rejected the offer to claim power over
the kingdoms of the world in exchange
for worshipping the devil, now the third.

This third pitch is even scripture related.

Taken from the psalm we chanted today,
the devil uses part of Psalm 91 to tempt Jesus.

A miracle like the one the devil
suggests to Jesus would have
an amazing "Wow" factor.

It would surely get the religious leaders on his side.

It would bring significant protection to Jesus
for his beginning work and ministry.

That was what the devil tried
to tempt Jesus with, here.

You can prove that you have
personal protection, Jesus.

Jesus countered again from the Torah.

His response: Do not put the Lord your God

to the test” recalls the miracle when God
provided water from the rock for
the complaining Israelites.

It is tempting for us to “test God’s presence with us.”

To be reckless with ourselves or others
by pushing for God to prove God’s self.

We remember what Jesus said,
“Do not put the Lord your God to the test.” (Pause)

This first Sunday of Lent begins by marking
the events of Jesus in the wilderness.

He remembered who he was and we are called
to remember who we are, too.

We belong to God, we are children of parents,
we are a sibling, a friend and beloved.

Let’s not forget ourselves or forget
to whom we belong.

For when we do...
we are in peril, and when we forget,
we are the most susceptible to the devil.

The Rev. James Flowers said that

“if you have ever said or heard someone say,
“I don’t know you anymore,”
then perhaps you understand.

If you have ever looked in the mirror and
beheld a stranger staring back at you,
then you know.

You know the pain and the despair that
comes with forgetting - with forgetting,
but also with betrayal; betrayal of God
and betrayal of self.”

This Lent let us remember by recalling
Jesus’ use of scripture.

Three texts I know you can put to memory:
“One does not live by bread alone.”
“Worship the Lord and serve only God.”

And “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”

Lent is a time to unplug and get ourselves reset
and working again... in the best , most healthy way

And to remember who we are and who we can be.

AMEN!

