

“Patience Lord But Quick”

February 17th, 2013 1st Sunday of Lent

Luke 4: vs. 1-13 and Romans 10: 8b-13

I think that’s the basic reason why we celebrate Lent when we do. Ohioans feel it probably moreso than most. Winter is its last firm tenacious grip. We’ve seen that over the last couple of weeks and soon , sooner in our aspirations, spring will be here. The cold realm of death and dying, seasonally an undeniable inescapable fact will fade away but it takes time. Notice in our passage to day how important it is to give a detailed account of time.

40 days and nights, the wilderness wonderings of Israel with Moses was 40 years. It represented the same arduous waiting, for a community, for Jesus, and for us. 40 is a good long time. When I reached the age of 40 it was no different. When I say I am 52 now or that I have been married 25 plus years and I am talking to younger folks I get that same gawking open mouth amazement that most of you get and I have learning to LOL inside.

It’s part of our Instant culture, fast food, fast lines, a Kroger every half mile, the one traveling 5 miles below the speed limit looking cautiously for the next turn gets a honk and a middle finger. It occered to me this week the devil is a lot more successful with today’s world and todays church than he was with Jesus? Why ? In the wilderness Jesus taught us perfect patience , but we are definitely more in tune with instant karma as John Lennon coined it. We want it all now instantly and we will cut any corner to make it happen.

Henri Nouwen

The first temptation (turning stones into bread) is the perennial temptation that Christians face to be relevant in our success-driven and consumerist world. Whatever contexts in which we find ourselves, we are always confronted with that irresistible pull to be indispensable, competent, productive and in control. We have so many how to Christian books and workshops celebrating the

victorious Christian and the victorious church, we forget what made the victorious Christ. Jesus discovered early that instant success is the devil's cat nip and we love to swat after the bait compulsively, if I had a penny for every lottery hopeful wasting today on a practically unattainable temptation of an instant wad of cash, I would be a millionaire and that is why the lotto works, as a money maker. I love Nouwen's comment about minister's in this success driven world to be true to your calling you must become "completely irrelevant and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but your vulnerable self". We all need to recognize that in this cosmetic culture therein lies our unique strength

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

The second temptation has to do with the enticement to be spectacular. For Jesus, it meant having to give in to the sensational feat of throwing himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. Behind that so-called "act" lies an accompanying temptation to prove something. But as Nouwen puts it, "Jesus refused to be a stuntman" We live in a culture that practically worships the self-made self, "the self-made man or woman who can do it all alone" A father invites his boss to a formal holiday dinner at his house. He knows that the man is very proud of himself and lets everyone in on that fact, but since he is lonely he believes a family meal will soften his heart a bit. He warns his son to be on his best behavior. Well at table the old man begins to announce to just how he set off in life to become a self-made man. He went on and on to list his many accomplishments, never once taking time to thank those who did the real work. When he finally took a breathe the boy interjected, "If you're a self-made man why did you make yourself that way?" Good question!

ANSWER IS CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

The third and final temptation is the temptation to be powerful, to domination, control, and force or manipulate others to accommodate self. Who more than Jesus understood this temptation. The who is King of Kings, the First and Last, the Lord of Lords, came not to be served but to serve. Even those given the title servants today want the perks more than the authentic giving of the self freely. I have seen pastors and military officers and Christian lay leaders who use there

servant role in a very twisted and ultimately frustrating way “ I serve to achieve what I desire” ultimately bowing down to a warped call within saying “life is ours to dispose of”

ANSWER IS REFLECTING UPON THE SOURCE OF POWER AS OPPOSED TO THE POSSESSION AND PRACTICE OF POWER

Notice that every time the devil tempted him Jesus merely revealed his true self. That's important in understanding what I am about to say. The greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity, or power, alone but self-rejection. Success, popularity, and power can indeed present a great temptation, but their seductive quality often comes from the way they are part of the much larger temptation to reject who you are and who God is in you. When we have come to believe in the voices that call us worthless and unlovable, then success, popularity, and power are easily perceived as attractive solutions. As soon as someone accuses me or criticizes me, as soon as I am rejected, left alone, or abandoned, I find myself thinking, "Well, that proves once again that I am a nobody." And I need to make myself a somebody ... [My dark side says,] I am no good... I deserve to be pushed aside, forgotten, rejected, and abandoned. Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the "Beloved." Being the Beloved constitutes the core truth of our existence.” What more can we ask for what more can we attain and Jesus shares this identity with us all. You don't have to earn it, it's part of who you are in Christ,

The Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor

Are you hungry?

I am famished.

Well, what's wrong with that? Are you dying?

No.

Can you stand being hungry for a while longer?

Maybe. I guess so.

Okay, so what else? Are you lonely?

Yes, I am! I am terribly lonely!

What's wrong with being alone? Will it kill you?

I don't like it.

That's not what I asked. Can you live through it?

Probably not, but I'll try.

God is telling you today through Jesus' experience to be who you are meant to be. Stop compromising. Stop cutting corners. Stop trying to earn something that is a free gift. Be yourself for once and be patient with who you are, because God is not only patient with you. God is patient with all.

Amen!