

Today marks the first Sunday of our 40 day journey through Lent. 40 days not including Sundays. For some of us, Lent is known as a time to give something up. Maybe chocolate, soft drinks, Facebook.

I had one parent tell me that she and her son were giving up yelling at each other during Lent. I know someone else who has made a commitment to do something generous and kind for someone else every day during the season of Lent.

Lent is an invitation for us to spend 40 days making a commitment to do something that brings us closer to God. Maybe it is a renewed focus on daily prayer with attention to confession of sin. Maybe it is a focus on weekly worship. Maybe Lent for you is a time to focus on some type of act of love and care for someone else. Lent is a time for us to make a commitment toward something that seeks to draw us closer to God.

One of the rituals that we are invited into during the season of Lent is fasting. The first text we read today, Isaiah 58:6-9, gave us some guidelines about fasting. Isaiah tells us that fasting is an opportunity to give up food that we can then serve to those who do not have enough food for themselves. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that invites us to place our trust in God rather than in our own ability to take care of our needs.

In the text that we are about to read we will find both 40 days and fasting. This is the story of Jesus being tempted by the devil for 40 days. As we read this text pay attention to the three temptations that Jesus is presented and then begin to think about your own temptations.

Read Luke 4:1-13

The first temptation that Jesus is presented concerns food. Turn these stones into bread and you will be satisfied, Jesus is told. But Jesus does not fall for the trap that food will supply him with what he really craves. Jesus responds to this temptation by stating that bread is not the only thing that is necessary for one to live. So the first temptation that Jesus receives concerns the temptation of food.

The second temptation that Jesus is presented concerns power. I will give you all of the power and glory that you could possibly need, Jesus is now told. But Jesus does not fall into the temptation of the kind of power that the devil offers. And the devil does offer power. Power comes in many forms.

But Jesus does not fall for the bait to obtain the kind of power that the devil offers. Jesus decides to focus on the kind of power that comes from worshipping God and God alone.

The third temptation that Jesus is presented concerns protection and recognition. Throw yourself down and God will respond to your temper-tantrum and send angels to protect you. In other words, the devil tempts Jesus with being the acting out child who tries to use unhealthy ways to attract the attention of his parent.

But Jesus does not fall for the temptation of recognition and protection. Jesus pushes the devil away by saying that temper-tantrums do not work with God.

So Jesus gets to define what type of Messiah he will be. Will he be a political candidate who promises everyone everything that they wish? Will he be a Spectator Jesus who sits back and watches? Or will he be a Messiah who will protect you from everything?

Jesus rejects all of these types of Messiah. Jesus is not going to allow the temptations to control him. He chooses to be faithful to his calling from God.

So what about you and me? What are the temptations that you are facing that are an attempt to keep you from achieving what God wants you to be? What is your greatest weakness? What is it that if it got out of control it would bring you down?

Is it the bottle that is located in the garage? Is it the pill bottle in the cabinet? Is your temptation the co-worker or friend that hugs you a little too long? Is your temptation something on your computer or on your phone that you need to delete every time so that others don't see it? Is your temptation that hidden item in your room that is not yours to have?

Each of us faces temptations that if we gave into that temptation it would not only bring us down but it could bring down our family and our community and maybe this church. When we face those temptations and we feel weak, we are invited to remember this story from Luke. A story where Jesus also faces temptations and how he uses his trust in God to prevent him from giving into temptations that would have proved disastrous for him and for the whole world.

We are going to conclude with a music video. This is a song called "Slow Fade" by the band Casting Crowns. As this video shows, giving into temptation may not be something that happens quickly but is something that happens slowly over time due to several decisions that we make.

Show video "Slow Fade" by Casting Crowns

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QASREBVDsLk>

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