

**- Saint John's Pulpit (February 21, First Sunday in Lent)
- "Your Lenten Mission" Mark 1:9-15**

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

¹² And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

What Shall We Do?

Welcome all to St. John's in-person service again! Although we couldn't make it to this in-person service for the last three weeks cause of inclement weather, we are so glad to resume it now. Once again, thank you all for your support and help to make St. John's on-line service very special and wonderful in the meantime. Finally, it is the first Sunday of Lent.

The Lenten season this year... what shall we do? What would you like to do this season? We know how the Lenten season was in the pandemic a year ago. Still, we are at the tunnel, but we are moving forward slightly to see the end of this tunnel. This makes us feel hopeful and thankful.

Indeed, Lent is not new to us. We know it and how to make it. Fasting, abstaining all entertaining us, and prayers... What else can we add to our Lenten action items?

Mark 1:9-15 presents Jesus' three missions as he is going to do his ministry. Baptism, Temptation (Test), and Proclamation. These three missions are closely related to the story of Adam and Eve in the Book of Genesis. Let's take a moment to remember these two stories – both Adam and the Second Adam, Jesus Christ. Then, let's ask this question- what shall we do this Lent?

Baptism: Identify Who You Are

With what can we make this Lent more meaningful? Please remember who you are! In the text today, we can see a story of Jesus' Baptism. When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, then what happened? There was a voice from Heaven telling who Jesus was – Jesus' identity.

¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." Mark 1:11 NRSV

Yes, we all need to remember who we are. We all are children of God! Jesus, the Son of God cherished this identity carefully. He did not hesitate to reveal it. His identity had authority and power. However, Adam and Eve, the first human beings created by God did not remember who they were. A painful result from their oblivion was their Fall!

So, I would like to challenge you to do this. Let us remember who we are. Jesus died for all. God sacrificed His Son to save us! Please renew and refresh your identity. This is our Lenten mission.

Resist

The second scene from the story today delivers Jesus' temptation. As we know, Jesus was tested or tempted by Satan. Uneasy temptation, but a happy ending!

To live as children of God does not guarantee our glorious moment only. Just as Jesus was tempted by Satan, so are we. Every time and everywhere! However, if we are children of God, we need to learn how to resist all temptation around us.

How? Just like Jesus, by the Words of God! In other texts dealing with Jesus' temptation, we easily know that Jesus overcame his test by the Words of God.

⁴ But he answered, "It is written,

'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4 NRSV

It is written, it is written, and it is written... Jesus overcame all his temptation by God's words! However, how were Adam and Eve? Like Jesus, the first human beings Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan. Before their temptation, they got this word from God clearly which puts in Genesis 2:16-17.

¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." Genesis 2:16-17 NRSV

When Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan, they tried to remember God's words, but they had no confidence in it, so, they stumbled!

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?'" ² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; Genesis 3:1-4 NRSV

Ironically, what Adam Eve trusted was not God's words, but the dangerous whisper from Satan, "you will not die!" We all are not free from temptation. However, we can resist it! By the Words of God!

So, do not dream your life without temptation. But let your life be full of God's Words! If Adam and Eve had remembered God's words, they would not stumble! What about us?

Proclaim the Kingdom of God

The last scene of the story today is Jesus' proclamation. After the temptation, Jesus came to Galilee and began his ministry by proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." Mark 1:14-15 NRSV

What about Adam and Eve after the temptation? They lost Paradise! Yes, they had to leave the Garden of Eden because of their Sin! But, Jesus began to proclaim the Kingdom of God and share its great vision with people after the temptation.

If there is another mission for us to fulfill in this Lenten season, it must be proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Let's make our place another Kingdom of God. You remember this phrase whenever you recite the Lord's Prayer,

"Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven..."

We are still in the pandemic. Yes, all are going through very difficult times full of fear, anxiety, and stress. But we can share the Good News with one another! Why don't you do one thing to encourage one another during this Lent? The Bible already taught us how to overcome fear with success!

18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. 1 John 4:18 NRSV

We don't have to proclaim negative news or fake ones! The only thing we need to do is to proclaim the Kingdom of God. It is time to do it! It is Lent!