

March 5

“THE SPRIT LEADS”

Genesis 2:7

Special Music: “In the Wilderness” Rachel Morely

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWTPH0mmFAk&list=RDFWTPH0mmFAk&start_radio=1



Genesis 2:7

⁷ And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

(breath of life translates as spirit)

UNPREPARED

The arid, cracked land lay before me
No tree for shade or canape
The spirit led me to this land
This place of desert Holy sand
I came prepared for my journey.

Compass, water, and a loaf of bread
Shirt for my back and hat for my head
I had my hiking boots and canvas jeans
Some soup and a can of beans
A ground cloth and blow up bed,

A knife, a bow, and fishing line
And just in case, a flask of wine.
First aid kit and sleeping bag
Raised above me a marching flag
A knife, a match, and a ball of twine.

So here I am God, ready to go
I'll pull out my compass so you can show
Me the way. The way Lord
Show me the way.,
But all it does is spin.
And spin,
And spin.
And spin.

I'm confused God,

**I came prepared face the test
To make my way through the wilderness
But you still need to point the way
Lest I turn and walk away
And remove myself from this emptiness**

**And the spirit whispered in the wind
Speaking gentle as a friend
"Tis true, my child, you came prepared
To take this journey unimpaired,
This Journey that you failed to comprehend.**

**The journey is not yours to find
The journey is mine and only mine
Allow your spirit to grab and touch
For I am your God who loves you much
You must lose yourself to be one with mine.**

**So toss the garb and lose the gear
Lose the boots and drop your fear
You're in my hands, I will provide
I'll be your nourishment and your guide
As we take this path together."**

The story of Lent can be difficult to follow because it can sound almost like a fairy tale or a fable. The circumstances of The Temptations occur directly after Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist and the Holy Spirit has descended on Christ. The characters involved are somewhat surreal to us. We have Jesus. We have the Holy Spirit. We have Satan. We can't see Him, but we know that God the Father is there with a courtside view. We have a healthy dose of what seems like magic. We have Matthew, Mark, and Luke telling us the story, but the story occurs before the disciples meet Jesus. There is no audience other than God and the characters. So, if someone is looking at this story through non-Christian eyes, it might seem to be a bit sketchy to them, almost like a human philosophy question, "If a tree falls in the forest where no one can hear it, how do we know if it really fell?"

As humans, we want something tangible to hang onto. We want to be able to see it, touch it, hear it, smell it before we really believe it. We want an amphitheater in the desert with thousands of spectators watching Jesus exhausted, hungry, thirsty, broken skin, parched lips, dirty and barely able to function take on the antithesis of the Creator of the Universe. The challenges that will be occurring will be mental and spiritual while Jesus is at His weakest physically.

But we don't have an amphitheater filled with thousands of spectators. We have a hard enough time envisioning the Son of God in the condition He is in when He does battle with Satan. So, how do we attempt to understand what is going on and how do we bring this material, this scripture from the Apostles

Matthew, Mark, and Luke into perspective so that we can embrace them at a level that can move our spirit towards change, edifying our relationship with Jesus Christ?

Did anyone think my choice of scripture today was a little odd for the first sermon in our Lenten series, Foundations of Lent? What in the world are we doing all the way back over in Genesis? What can we learn about Lent from Genesis?

7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Genesis 2:7

“and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” The Hebrew translation “breath of life” is better translated as Spirit. God breathed the Spirit into man. God’s spirit. The Holy Spirit. The breath of life.

And that very same Spirit, the Spirit of God is the one we find in Matthew 4:1.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Luke 4:1

1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness

And Mark 1:12

12 At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness,

This same spirit that God breathes into His first human being to give him life is the same spirit that is being use by God the Father to deliver his Son into the hands of His greatest enemy. It is the same Spirit that God gives the Apostles at Pentecost. It is the same Spirit that descends on Jesus when He is baptized by John. It is the same Spirit that joins with ours when we accept Jesus into our lives and choose to live for His purpose.

But I know that at some point in our Christian walk we start to ask questions. Why in the world would God send His son into the arms of the enemy? We're taught that God was allowing Satan to tempt Jesus, to test Him, to make Him and offer what He couldn't refuse in order to put an end to the contest before it ever began. And we know that Jesus passed every test by quoting scripture. But I don't think it's that simple. We have to continue to ask ourselves that if God knew that Jesus was His son, and satan knew that Jesus was God's son, and Jesus knew that God was His Father, then what positive thing could come from these temptations? God knew that Jesus wouldn't fail, and Jesus knew that He wouldn't fail. So only satan felt there was anything to gain here. Why even put satan in this position of authority? Is God trying to prove something to satan? If so, what is to be gained by that? By His nature as Creator of the Universe, God has nothing to prove to satan. When our minds bring these questions to the surface, we begin to ponder the story from a different angle.

In every detective show I have ever watched, there is always that one detective. You know the punchline. Everyone is confused about motive for committing the crime. And that one detective says, “Well, let’s look for whoever has the most to gain,” or “Follow the money.” Who does have the most to gain here. In this situation where the Holy Spirit has led Jesus to a place where satan is tempting him, who has the most to gain? We might think, “Well, satan has the most to gain because if Jesus fails the tests, then satan wins.”

Satan wins. You here that? It sounds like a contest or a board game or an athletic event. Satan wins. And from our perspective and maybe even satan’s perspective, it might seem like that this is some great cosmic board game with control of the universe as a prize. I mean, satan does seem like he has a handle on everything, knowing just what to say, just what to offer, and the exact conditions to offer it. He truly believes he has a chance to walk away with all the marbles, so he comes prepared to give it all he has.

But just suppose, just suppose that he is the only one there who truly believes that it is a contest, a game, an opportunity to take charge of it all. What if God the Father, God the son, and God the Holy Spirit don’t see it that way at all? What if there really isn’t a contest? What if there is something else going on here that isn’t that obvious? What if this contest is just a diversion for the true purpose of this altercation? Maybe this was God’s way of giving Jesus the opportunity to look into the face of pure evil and understand why what he was about to do, what he came to do, was so very important both for the human race

and for our Creator. Just maybe God was prepping Jesus for what was about to come.

Jesus was going to engage with the sickness, and despair, and suffering that pervades our world at a level no human could survive. God needed a bridge between Himself and humankind. And that bridge had to be stronger than any human. It had to be as strong as God Himself. This journey into the wilderness will become a time to strengthen the bond with His Heavenly Father, a time when He will be forced to rely totally on the strength and power of God, complete and total dependence. He can't reach into His backpack and pull out a flask of water. He won't find a roll of bread stuffed in a cloak pocket. His reliance on his Father is welded to His relationship with His Father. Only if He should challenge God by removing His dependence on Him, could He fail. But He is as sure as God Himself of His place in Creation.

So, when satan comes to find Him, Jesus has already procured everything that He needs. No, He still didn't have bread or water. But instead, He has the power of God at His fingertips because He is existing in the Spirit and ready to meet evil head on. He knows the answers to satan's questions before satan even asks them because the answers are a part of who Jesus is. As He is bound to the Spirit, He is bound to God.

- 1 "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."
- 4 Jesus answered, **"It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"**

**“If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:
“He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.””**

7 Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

9 “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

10 Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

I believe in the dual nature of Christ, that He was born fully God and fully human. I don't think we can separate the two and say, “This is Jesus when He is God and this is Jesus when He is human. I do not believe that God strips Him of His Godhood as he enters this battle arena. And, although I faithfully believe the words, “I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me,” I also know that I am not Christ, and that I must lean into Him to take advantage of that strength as I face a world gone mad with sin and guilt. I must rely on the bond that Jesus and I have created to get me through, just as Jesus leans into His bond with His Father and the Holy Spirit.

So how do we apply this information, preacher? How does this change how we approach Lent? We say to God:

“Here I am, Lord, standing at the edge of the wilderness. I'm ready to take my Lenten journey. I have all my stuff. I have everything I my need, including my tent, sleeping bag, and rations. What's that you say? I need to lighten my load? Here, I will leave these chocolates behind. How's that? Oh, yeah, probably pretty silly of me to try and bring this cooler with ice cream, I'll leave it behind, too. I hear ya, Lord, I will leave

behind the wine and cigarettes, too. What's that you say, Lord? More? Really? How much? All of it? You want me to leave it all behind? But how will I survive, Lord? What's that you say? You will make sure I have everything I need? Well, Lord, I am willing to go wherever you want me, too, but at least let me prepare. Can't I even take my pocketknife? The only thing you want me to take is myself? No? You can't help me transform into who you want me to be if I don't trust you completely? You're asking an awful lot of me, Lord. Yes, yes, I know, you died for me. You gave your all for me. And now I need to give you all of me. But everyone else is giving up chocolate, ice cream, and bad habits. I know, I know.

“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

I just didn't think you meant it literally.

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

Too often what we think we need and what God thinks we need don't are not the same things. That's where faith comes in. So, by leaving everything behind, we begin our Lenten journey, our time of bonding with our Creator by removing all of the impediments in our lives that keep us from drawing close. God may, in turn, return some of those things to us, but we should not count on it. This level of trust is difficult. I'm not going to tell you it's a piece of cake. It's hard. The desires of this world constantly impinge on our desire to stay focused on God. Satan dangles this and offers that in front of us expecting us to fail. If we keep our focus where it is supposed to be, we won't fail. But if we take our eyes off our purpose, if we forget that the object here is to draw closer to God, if we stop listening to the voice of our Creator, we will fail.

That is why the season of Lent is so important to us. It is a time of drawing closer to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It's like breathing in fresh air. It is knowing that no matter how good or how bad things may get, God's got us in the palm of His hand.

God bless you all

AMEN

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