

Luke 4:1-13

Lent 1

February 21, 2010

There is a difference between a soldier who has been in combat and one who spent the war in an office.

There is a difference between a woman whose husband left her to raise three children all alone and the woman whose husband was a doting father.

There is a difference between a man who always has had work and a man who has gone through a year unemployed.

There is a difference between that brilliant student who never has to crack a book and the one not nearly so intelligent who has to work hard for every B she gets.

There is a difference between the mother whose children always excel and the mother whose son has Asperger's syndrome.

Sometimes the steeper path leads to giving up.

Sometimes the one who has had a steeper path is strengthened by the test.

But most always the one that is never challenged is like a plant grown indoors – not hardened for the wind and sun and pounding rain.

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness where for forty days he was tested by the devil.

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into testing. What would happen? Did Jesus know all along? Did God? Or was it a real question what would happen, who Jesus would become?

How you answer that question says a lot about how you think about life, how you think of Jesus.

When the soldier comes back a hero, it seems inevitable. When the kids tell about how mom held it all together and worked two jobs and raised us it seems like that is just the way mom was. But I am guessing there was a moment for the soldier when it could have gone either way, many moments for the mom when she could have given in to exhaustion but she did not. Was it a real test for Jesus? I think so.

He was hungry. Forty days hungry. No food in sight. “If you are the Son of God command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” In the gospel according to Luke these are the first words spoken after the voice from heaven declared, “You are my Son, whom I love. With you I am well pleased.” God’s voice.

Then next the voice of the devil, “If you are the Son of God command this stone to become a loaf of bread.”

For us it is not always clear when God is speaking, when the devil. Sometimes we really think we are doing a good thing and find out that we have harmed someone through our attempt to help. It happens in wanting to protect our children and finding out that we should have let them face the challenge on their own. It happens when we do more and more in the church and soon we are the only ones trying. Luther taught that we should “Sin boldly and repent more boldly still.” Sometimes we are better at the sinning boldly than we are with the repenting when it is clear that our efforts have done more harm than good.

That day Jesus knew it was the devil suggesting so he answered, “One does not live by bread alone.” Jesus would not use his power to make things easier for himself.

Next was the offer of all the glory and authority over the civilized world. A good thing for Jesus to have but the price would be worshiping the devil. Jesus responded, “Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.”

Finally the devil quoted the psalm we read this morning – the psalm that inspired the hymn, “On Eagle’s Wings”. “He will command his angels concerning you to protect you. On their hands they will bear you up so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.” God’s watchful care – a good thing. But Jesus refused to test that care that day, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test,” was Jesus response.

Was Jesus more battle ready after all of this? Had he learned something about himself in this testing? Had the Father learned something about the Son?

I know what I learn in all of this: For Jesus it was not about himself. Each of his answers had to do with God, seeking what God wanted, living by what God has given. His testing led him not to declaring, “This is who I am,” but to declaring, “This is what God wants for me.”

It is not about us, what we can make of ourselves, what we can make of our children, what we can make of our church. It is about God.

Your life is not about your getting your own way but about God being glorified in your living. Your coming here to worship is not about what you will get for yourself but about what God is doing in you and through you as you worship. You and I are not the center – the promise the serpent made to Eve was “You will be like God.”

Let God be God. Jesus did. Amen.