

10th March 1 Sunday of Lent Temptation
Deut. 26:1-11 Luke 4:1-13

Luke, in his gospel, gives account of

- Jesus being baptised in the River Jordan where the Holy Spirit descended upon Him
- Jesus returning from the Jordan full of the Holy Spirit and then being led into the desert
- Jesus being led by the Spirit whilst being tempted by the devil for 40 days
- Devil specifically testing Jesus in 3 areas
 - turning stone into bread
 - worshipping the devil in order to get glory and authority
 - putting God to the test by throwing Himself off the top of the temple
- When the devil had no tactics left to try he left Jesus alone for a while

In the text no-one else was there, there were no eye witness accounts so I wonder how this account came to be written? Many experts have spent much time and ink debating whether or not this incident ever really “happened”. But 3 out of 4 of the gospel writers include it so it is there for a reason.

Remember that Luke was a Greek gentile Christian. He was not Jewish

It is interesting to think that ancient historians didn't just deal in facts but in actual examples and that is how the Romans taught their morals - through examples
They used concrete situations and real stories as examples to learn by

In the gospel of Luke Jesus is our Saviour and He is also our example by which we are to learn and model our behaviours

Luke 3 includes John the baptists announcement of the arrival of the Messiah and this is the example, the model, that Luke wants to teach us of a new type of partnership.

God the Holy Spirit descends upon human flesh and blood of Jesus

And our reading today from Luke 4 is an example of this new partnership in action

‘Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned ...and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness’ vs.1

In the desert, after 40 days of not eating, when He was tired and famished, the devil's temptations try to seduce Jesus into ministering out of His personal, inherent divinity instead of in partnership with God the Father through the Holy Spirit

Will Jesus, when tested, provide for His own physical needs, His own path to glory and manipulation of God the Father?

Or will He be that perfect example of human and divine partnership in action?

We read that Jesus did not succumb to the temptations of the devil because He saw through the devils lies and attempts to distort the truth and He was able to counter each of the deceitful words with scriptural truths

The devil presented wants as needs, falsehoods as truths and distrust as faith.

The devils second attempt to tempt Jesus - that all the kingdoms of the world have been given to him - sounds as if it could be true. As we look around our world it would be easy to think that it all belongs to the devil. But the devil then demands false worship. He wants Jesus to worship him rather than God... *‘If you then worship me it will all be yours’ vs 7*

We are presented with such distortions all around us every day in

advertising - this is the 'perfect' image - you will only be successful / attractive / loved if ...
political agendas - my Economics teacher used to say 'lies, damned lies and statistics'
the media
and many other places

How do we learn to resist them?

By maintaining a strong partnership with God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Not by doing things in our own strength, on our own, ignoring or even de-valuing God

The Holy Spirit was with Jesus

He was anointed at His baptism and was able to remain faithful to God amidst His testing

Testing often comes about in times of hunger and despair, when we are weak and vulnerable
Dependence on and partnership with God facilitates Him providing for all our needs

It can be so easy, in our culture, to become complacent in believing that God is no longer necessary to us for protection and hunger and hostility! Most of us have warm, cosy, secure homes. Most of us have food on the table, in the cupboards, in the fridge, in an array of shops where we can buy whatever we want.

These things can lead us to complacency and lack of dependence and partnership with God.

A friend of mine, when he first visited South Africa came back and said the women he met had only 3 things; a smile, HIV and Jesus

They knew their need for partnership with God; they had no other means of surviving
We have lost that dependence and can therefore become complacent in our faith

We often talk about what people have given up for Lent and sometimes we can just give something up for the sake of it, or to help our diet

Sometimes it can be a good discipline for us, but maybe sometimes it can be nothing more than a box ticking exercise, that may even, thinking back to last week, be an exercise in self righteousness if we are not careful. Just yesterday I found my self subtly bragging that I had given up chocolate... for a whole 4 days!!!

But what about if we embraced the opportunity and used Lent to be more intentional about our Partnership with God and being more receptive to God's grace?

What might our Lent look like then?

How might our faith grow if we took on the prayer challenge of last week more intentionally?

What if we set some time aside more often to seek God in where we need to repent?

Or if we fasted from something in order that we prayed more

Or we intentionally read a passage of scripture and dwelt in that for some time to let God speak into our lives through it.

God is so gracious. His love is so generous.

And He soooo longs for us to be in greater partnership with Him

Jesus could have used His inherent divinity alone, as the Son of God, to deal with the temptations of the devil

But He didn't. He worked in partnership with God the Holy Spirit

Why do we think we can overcome the deceitful ways of the devil, even notice them for what they are if we are self reliant, drawing upon our own strength, if Jesus did not?

So how can we grow in partnership with Him?

Only by being intentional about it

And maybe this Lent is the time to get serious about it!