

Sermon Lent 1C ([Click here for slides](#))

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Deuteronomy 26:1-11

When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, "Today I declare to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us." When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God, you shall make this response before the LORD your God: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. **So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O LORD, have given me.**" You shall set it down before the LORD your God and bow down before the LORD your God. Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house

Luke 4:1-13

After his baptism, 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 tempted by the devil**. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, **he was famished**.

The devil said to him, "**If you are the Son of God**, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "**To you I will give their glory and all this authority**; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written,

'Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him.'"

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "**If you are the Son of God**, throw yourself down from here, for it is written,

'He will command his angels concerning you,
to **protect** you,'

and

'On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him **until an opportune time**.

SLIDE 1



INTRO:

TODAY'S GOSPEL (TEMPTATION OF JESUS IN THE WILDERNESS)
UNIVERSAL HUMAN TEMPTATIONS & "TESTS"

Context for today's Gospel:

If you're tracking the Sunday Lectionary, what immediately precedes today's Gospel lesson is: Story of the Transfiguration

Luke 9: *Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"*

If you're tracking the Gospel of Luke, what immediately precedes today's Gospel lesson is: Story of the Baptism of Jesus

Luke 3: *and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'*

SOOOOOO....

If Jesus—the Son of God, the Chosen, the Beloved One—
didn't get to skip these tests,

we probably won't get to skip them, either—

But if we can't skip them, we can (at the very least)

Look to Jesus—look to the scriptures—

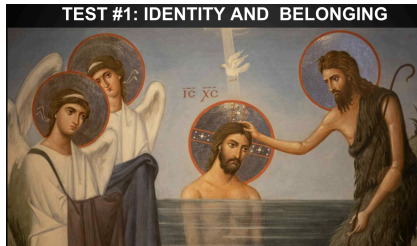
So we can learn to see them coming,

and when they do come

We can recognize them

and have on hand the tools we need to successfully get through the test.

SLIDE 2



After his baptism, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit... was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where **for forty days he was tempted by the devil...** The devil said to him, "**If you are the Son of God...**

(PRE-TEST) IDENTITY & BELONGING

First words out of the Devil's mouth are: "*If you are the Son of God...*

**SOUNDS LIKE THE INTERNAL VOICE THAT SAYS
I'M NOT SURE WHO I AM.
I'M NOT SURE I AM LOVED.
HOW CAN I PROVE I AM WORTHY?
HOW CAN I PROVE I BELONG?**

SYMBOL...

IF YOU ARE.....

SON OF GOD/GOOD PERSON-PARENT-STUDENT-WORKER-BOSS

TEMPTATION IN THE FACE OF THIS TEST

is to try to justify, defend, and prove ourselves. Temptation is to seek security in a FALSE IDENTITY built around our response to the demands and expectations of others.

I WONDER...

When has your sense of identity, your sense of belonging been tested? How have you seen this universal test play out—in your life? In our world?

SLIDE 3



TEST #1 SCARCITY & SURVIVAL

[Jesus was in the desert for forty days,] and he ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.

SOUNDS LIKE THE INTERNAL VOICE THAT SAYS

I'M AFRAID THAT THERE WON'T BE ENOUGH RESOURCES TO MEET MY NEEDS! HOW CAN I ENSURE MY SURVIVAL?

SYMBOL

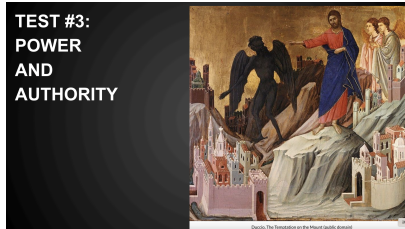
BREAD-ANY ESSENTIAL MATERIAL RESOURCE

THE TEMPTATION IN THE FACE OF THIS TEST IS
...to over-create, over-extract, over-consume, hoard

I WONDER....

When have you been tested by the experience or threat of scarcity? How have you seen this universal test play out—in your life? In our world?

SLIDE 4



TEST #2 Ego/longing for **power & authority (or CONTROL)**

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

SOUNDS LIKE THE INTERNAL VOICE THAT SAYS

I FEEL POWERLESS! HOW CAN I INCREASE MY POWER and Sense of CONTROL?

SYMBOL

“All the KINGDOMS of the World”-

POLITICAL POWER– POWER/CONTROL IN GENERAL

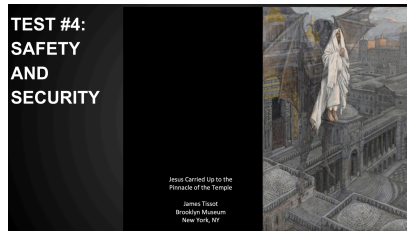
THE TEMPTATION IN THE FACE OF THIS TEST IS ...

see the world in terms of a hierarchy—seek a way crawl, or climb, or claw our way to the top— and then to control everyone and everything beneath us.

I WONDER...

When have you been tempted by the allure of power or control? How have you seen this universal test play out—in your life? In our world?

SLIDE 5



TEST #3 Anxiety about **Safety and Security** (Longing for Protection, Avoid Mortality)

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' ..."

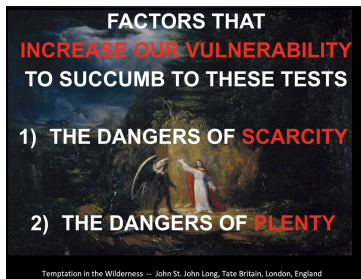
SOUNDS LIKE THE INTERNAL VOICE THAT SAYS
I FEEL UNSAFE! HOW CAN I ENSURE MY SECURITY?

SYMBOL
TEMPLE/RELIGION (OR IDEOLOGY)

THE TEMPTATION IN THE FACE OF THIS TEST IS...treat religion (or ideology, or worldview) as a safeguard against danger whatever threatens our sense of security (and, in some cases, our illusions of immortality)

I WONDER...
When have you been tempted to demonstrate the power or superiority of your own religious faith, practice, or community? How have you seen this universal test play out—in your life? In our world?

SLIDE 6



PART 2: WHAT MAKES US MORE VULNERABLE TO THESE TESTS?

- 1) (DANGERS OF SCARCITY–GOSPEL)
 - a) Hunger (Lack of food, community, rest...)
- 2) *****(**DANGERS OF PLENTY**–1ST LESSON)
 - a) Forgetfulness, Accumulation

[Deuteronomy 26) In Deuteronomy, God (through Moses) gives extremely detailed instructions for every aspect of community life to the People of God who have left slavery and Egypt and are preparing to enter into a new future in the “promised land.” God knows that the temptations and tests that God’s people will face in the Promised Land will be, in many ways, even more perilous than those they faced as enslaved people in Egypt. As slaves in Egypt, God’s people HAD to remember God, and they HAD to take care of each other. In the Promised Land, God fears that abundance will lead to forgetfulness, to illusions of self-sufficiency, to temptations to accumulate wealth and hoard resources.

And so, throughout Deuteronomy, God, through Moses, issues careful instructions for the people for the future...for *[When God has] brought you into that place of abundance and security and and has given you a land, a land flowing with milk and honey. [For] When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it.....*

SLIDE 7



PART 3: WHAT GIVES US THE STRENGTH TO FACE THESE TESTS?

In times of lack: What helps us resist the temptations that threaten us when we're **Hungry**

SPIRITUAL FOOD "Food"

Obvious physical needs-food, water, sleep, exercise, connection

Less obvious spiritual needs: Prayer & Scripture (Jesus)

Helps us combat the temptations **Forgetfulness**

PRACTICE REMEMBERING

Remember who GOD is

AND remembering who WE are

- **Personal History** (WHOLE history of God's faithfulness in our life. Including BAPTISM)
- **Communal History (Deuteronomy--Stories of our Ancestors; Stories of "Salvation History" in Scripture)**
- *A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey*

FINALLY: Helps us combat the temptations **Accumulation**
GIVING TO GOD & SHARING IN COMMUNITY

So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O LORD, have given me." You shall set it down before the LORD your God and bow down before the LORD your God. Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house

Our faithful response to abundance is NOT accumulation

First response is Giving Back to God

Second response is Sharing Abundance in Community (broadly defined.)

SLIDE 8



Cristofano Allori, Christ Ministered To By Angels
Italian, Early 17th Century

CONCLUSION

WHENEVER you feel the Tempter close at hand...

REMEMBER WHO GOD IS
REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE

STAY GROUNDED IN THE PRACTICES MAKE YOU STRONG ENOUGH
TO FACE THE TESTS:

- EAT WELL (INCLUDING SPIRITUAL FOOD OF SCRIPTURE & PRAYER)
- PRACTICE REMEMBERING (GOD'S FAITHFULNESS—BOTH IN YOUR OWN PERSONAL LIFE, IN YOUR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY, AND THROUGHOUT HISTORY)
- GIVE GENEROUSLY & SHARE AND CELEBRATE IN COMMUNITY

Build these practices into the rhythm of your daily life

Until they become second nature

So that you have the strength to pass every test, and withstand temptations whenever they come...and stand firm in the strength of God's Love.