

Reflection by Hillarie Griggs

ays of Lent are most often associated with the time Jesus spent in the desert fasting, praying, emptied by the devil. This year we use Luke's version, one of the longer narratives where we read the conversation between Jesus and the devil.

After his baptism when Jesus was "full of the Spirit" (v1) he was led into the wilderness by the Spirit. If we had continued and read verse 14 we would have seen that he came out from his wilderness experience "in the power of the Spirit". The Spirit had been with him through his time of testing. It was through this experience that Jesus was empowered to continue in his ministry and his eventual journey to the cross. It is a pivotal moment in which Jesus understands his calling by rejecting the false paths the devils offers him.

The false paths offered to him were:

- Turning stones into bread. He was being encouraged to trust in his own power to satisfy his own needs, rather than trusting in God's provision.
- To worship the devil and be given the world. He was asked to switch his allegiance to someone who flatters him with shortcuts to power and glory. He was asked to turn to evil in order to gain power without suffering the agony of the cross.
- To throw himself off a high point and have God save him. He is being tempted to test whether God really is with him, and therefore in a desperate act forcing God to intervene.

Another way the devil tries to make Jesus abandon His mission is by questioning His identity. In two of the three temptations the devil starts by asking "If you are the Son of God then..." This had already been confirmed at his baptism when God had declared 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.' (3:22) This testing was not about whether Jesus was the Son of God but more about what kind of Son of God he would choose to be. His temptations were about clarifying who he was and what it meant to be obedient to his calling.

Each of us through our own baptism and our faith in Jesus Christ is made a child of God. We are called to become the person he created us to be, and to do the things he wants us to do. We need to understand and know, individually and as a church, who we are and what God is calling us to be and to do. How do we become more confident in discerning what it means to be the people of God, the church, in this place and at this time?

Temptation has the potential to interfere with our relationship and service to God. What are your personal temptations, the things that distract you from your relationship with God? Common human temptations appeal to our human need for material things, for power or success; and for our need for popularity which often stems from our desire to belong.

In Lent, because it is a dedicated season for reflection, repentance, and deepening our relationship with God, we often intentionally try to spend more time on our spiritual practices including prayer, reading the bible and attending study groups. There are a number of opportunities to do this throughout the Beacon Community. What are you going to try this year?