



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
www.trinitylutheran.ca

March 9, 2025
1st Sunday in Lent

Announcements

Juice boxes are still needed at Street Help Shelter. The Welcome Centre Shelter for Women needs granola bars, fruit rollup-type items and another snack item for snack packs for children at the centre. Please leave donated items on the table in the Narthex.

Coming Up

Mark your calendars for April 12. The second in the Trinity Arts concert series begins at 4 p.m. The concert will feature the Woodward String Quartet from the Detroit Symphony. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for students. Spread the word, invite family and friends. A reception follows the concert. Proceeds support our Music Outreach Program.

Midweek Holden Services will be part of our Lenten Season. The informal services will take place in the Fellowship Hall beginning March 12. There will be a simple meal of soup and bread at 5 p.m. and the service will begin at 6 p.m.

We Remember in our Prayers

In Residence: Cordelle

Members: Bunny, Donna, Ed, Joan, Susan, Connie, Brenda

Friends & Family: Anna, Asdis, Audrey, Dot, Jean, Mary, Randy, Roger, Rose, Frank, Tanya, Nash, Jeff

Thames Area Clergy: Pastor Sylvia Swiatoschik, St. Paul's, Leamington

Introduction to the day

These forty days called Lent are like no other. It is our opportune time to return to the God who rescues, to receive the gifts of God's grace, to believe with the heart and confess with the mouth the wonder of God's love in Jesus, and to resist temptation at every turn. This is no small pilgrimage on which we have just embarked. It is a struggle Jesus knew. It is a struggle Jesus shares. The nearness of the Lord, in bread and wine, water and word, will uphold and sustain us.

Hymns

ACS #1018 Deep Peace

ELW #319 O Lord, throughout these 40 days

ELW #325 I want Jesus to walk with me

ELW #808 Lord Jesus, you shall be my song

Prayer of the day

O Lord God, you led your people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide us now, so that, following your Son, we may walk safely through the wilderness of this world toward the life you alone can give, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

AMEN

First reading Deuteronomy 26: 1-11

¹When 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, ²you 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. ³You 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.” ⁴When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, ⁵you 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. ⁶When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, ⁷we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. ⁸The 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; ⁹and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰So 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. ¹¹Then 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.

Psalm: 91: 1-2, 9-16,

¹You who dwell in the shelter of ^l the Most High,

who abide in the shadow of ^l the Almighty—

²**you will say to the Lord, “My refuge ^l and my stronghold,**

my God in whom I put my trust.”

⁹ Because you have made the Lord your refuge, and the Most High your habitation,
¹⁰ **no evil will befall you, nor shall affliction come near your dwelling.**

¹¹ For God will give the angels charge over you, to guard you in all your ways.

¹² **Upon their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.**

¹³ You will tread upon the lion and viper; you will trample down the lion and the serpent.

¹⁴ **I will deliver those who cling to me; I will uphold them, because they know my name.**

¹⁵ They will call me, and I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble; I will rescue and honor them.

¹⁶ **With long life will I satisfy them, and show them my salvation.**

Second reading: Romans 10: 8b-13

^{8b} “The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹ because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For one believes with the heart and so is

justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. ¹¹ The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. ¹³ For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Gospel: Luke 4:1-13

¹ Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ² 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. ³ The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” ⁴ Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’”

⁵ Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ 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. ⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” ⁸ Jesus answered him, “It is written,

‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

⁹ 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, ¹⁰ for it is written, ‘He will command his angels

concerning you,
to protect you,'

¹¹ and

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

¹² Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do
not put the Lord your God to the test.' " ¹³
When the devil had finished every test,
he departed from him until an opportune
time.

Sermon

Wilderness Training

The road to Jericho takes a person
through the wilderness between
Jerusalem and the smaller city.

The road is narrow ... barely two-
lanes wide. There are places as you
leave Jerusalem that pass by Jewish
settlements ... modern condos with
artificial grass – because water is too
precious to waste on a lawn.

At the intersections where the
entrances meet the main road, there are
signs telling Palestinians to stay out.
They are not allowed to set foot in the
area without being arrested.

Farther along, the road hugs the
side of a cliff along the Wadi Qelt Valley.
This part is not for the faint of heart.

The curves are so tight that the bus
we were on had to stop ... back up ...
align itself with the road ahead before
proceeding with the trip.

All the while those of us on the
driver's side had a view of the 200-foot
drop to the valley floor. The passengers

who had trouble with heights sat on the
other side of the bus with their eyes
closed.

At one point ... we can see the
Monastery of Saint George at the other
side of the valley.

The monastery ... which can only be
reached by a foot path that hugs the
rock face ... was built in the 5th century.
The monks who built the monastery into
the cliff were part of the Christian ascetic
tradition that was known for its strict
vows, discipline, solitude, and its
devotion to God.

The monks chose a way of life that
they believed followed the example of
Jesus who went to the wilderness for
forty days. It was a life that was devoid
of distractions and allowed the monks to
pray and reflect on God's place in their
lives.

Mountain goats and other animals
grazed along the road as we travelled
through the wilderness toward Jericho.
Centuries ago, the area was home to
predators like lions and wolves.

Life is not absent in the harsh terrain
of the wilderness.

During Jesus' time the wilderness
was considered a place of chaos and
danger ... a place of demons, evil
spirits, thieves and vicious animals. The
uncertainty of life in the wilderness
made it a place to avoid and fear.

It is a place where people and their
faith are tested.

Luke tells us that the Spirit has led
Jesus out into the wilderness.

Jesus has been baptized in the
Jordan where the Spirit came down

upon him like a dove. Luke has shared Jesus' lineage all the way back to Adam ... showing that through baptism he has formally joined a storied line that stretched back to creation.

Jesus has been in the wilderness for 40 days ... tested by the devil ... every step of the way. In Mark's gospel, he is called the Tempter, which makes sense because that is what he does.

In early Jewish thought, what we think of the devil wasn't exactly the same for them.

In earlier times, the devil was not an opponent of God's rule, but rather was a sort of cosmic inspector ... testing and making sure that things are functioning as they should. He is ... as Biblical scholar Richard Swanson puts it: "carrying out his divinely ordained role by testing the durability of God's creation."

This morning, Jesus is famished at the end of his journey through the wilderness. It would be a vulnerable moment ... a perfect time to test him.

The devil calls on Jesus to prove who he is by changing a rock into bread so that he can have something to eat ... the devil offers Jesus authority over the world if Jesus worships him and accepts the devil's authority ... and then brings him to the top of the temple in Jerusalem ... daring him to jump off so that angels can save him and prove he is the Son of God.

"**I**E you are the son of God ..." is how the devil frames the temptation ... "**I**E you are..."

The Tempter is trying to test Jesus' identity and authority ... especially how he would use that authority. Each of these challenges are intended for Jesus to use his authority for his own benefit. What the devil presents as needs are actually wants ... falsehoods as truths and distrust as faith.

Such distortions of the truth are still practised in our time ... and ... with little time and attention ... aren't hard to recognize. They are all intended to gain more power ... more control ... or more wealth.

An interesting thing to consider is that the original Greek word that our version of the Bible translates into the word "if," can also mean "since." This changes the challenges that the devil offers in today's passage.

"Since you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread."

"Since you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here..."

Suddenly, this becomes more about Jesus' relationship to the world than it does about proving who he is.

These are tests are not about Jesus' identity and, but instead are about how that identity informs his vocation ... how it shapes his ministry to the world. By rejecting these temptations ... Jesus demonstrates his love, faithfulness and devotion for the world.

Jesus shows that these are the means to overturn the world and its values. Jesus' rejection of the offer of power makes it clear that the justice of God is acted out in acts of mercy and

forgiveness. This makes it possible for anyone to participate in the reign of God.

How Jesus uses his authority in his ministry is the constant in Luke's gospel.

Jesus' ministry is grounded in his baptism as the Spirit is made known in his life and ... through Jesus ... in the life of the world. Our vocation ... our ministry ... our life in community ... is grounded in our baptism.

Lent is living into the time of the already and not yet ... Lent is an in-between time as we live into the now and move with Jesus toward the cross.

We are moving along a well-worn path in the wilderness ... a path where we find the lost and wounded ... the famished and the thirsty ... the forgotten and the lonely. These 40 days are a time to consider how we minister to those we meet and seek out. It is a time that invites us to reflect upon our vocation.

As individuals ... and as a church ... we can find ourselves out in the wilderness. This seems most certainly true during recent weeks.

The chaos ... danger and uncertainty ... around us tempts us to look for places of security and comfort ... a place where we can hunker down and let the chaos pass us by ... a place where we can safely leave others to their own devices. After all, that is the way the world tells us things should be ... to take care of ourselves and ignore the needs of others.

But as we journey to the foot of the cross and anticipate standing among the

small crowd, may we each take the time to consider what tests we face and how we respond to the temptations that confront us.

Through the lens of this morning's story, we are invited to consider what tests our identity as Children of God and how do we live out this identity.

How do our words and actions confirm this identity ... more importantly ... do they?

It is a period when we ... like that bus on the road in the Judean wilderness ... can re-align ourselves to better handle the curves ahead ... by intentionally practicing those disciplines that strengthen our identity and our ministry to the community ... a ministry that is informed by our time in the wilderness.

A ministry where we can have faith that God is with us each step of the way ... and grace is made known.

AMEN

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever and ever.

AMEN