

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Intro

WELCOME TO LENT!

We usually think: “LENT – Yuck!” But it doesn't have to be that way.

Lent can be a time of refreshment;

- a time of self-discovery;
- a time of challenge.

Just like the time Jesus spent in the wilderness before he began his ministry.

## I. Temptation Short Cuts

A. As we heard in this morning's Gospel, following his Baptism, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the Wilderness.

1. There he fasts for many days and is confronted by the Tempter, who challenges Jesus at the very core of his being.

2. At Jesus' Baptism, a voice from heaven proclaimed, “This is my Beloved Son.”

3. Now in the wilderness, comes the **Devil**, which is Greek for the Hebrew word **Satan** – the **Accuser**, the **Adversary** – who says “If you are the Son of God...”

4. The Tempter is taking the very words the Voice proclaimed, and now is using them to tempt Jesus.

5. Basically, it's that old Elementary School taunt – “Prove it.”

6. The Tempter's strategy is to use the very thing anyone would assume to be Jesus' strength – he argues from scripture.

7. He cleverly quotes passages out of context or bases his temptations on ideas from the scriptures – in the most inviting way for the one who is being tempted.

B. So Jesus is tempted, in turn, to turn stones into bread; to be given all the kingdoms in the world; and to prove by spectacular means that he IS the Son of God.

1. But in reality, what Jesus is really being tempted to do is to **take a SHORT CUT** and not pay the price.

2. “Hey, if you're really the Messiah,” the Tempter says, “then here, make food out of nothing – you can feed EVERYBODY and they'll love you for it.

- “What a great way to prove you're the Son of God.

3. “Or, hey, I've got a good idea; we can work this out ourselves, just you and me. I've got all the great cities and kingdoms of the world right here in my back pocket. You WORSHIP me and I'll hand them all over to you right now.

- “Why have to go from Village to Village, teaching these thick headed people when I can give you everybody in the whole world right now?

- “Poof, then you can do whatever you want with them and they'll believe in you.

4. “Here, how about this, you jump from up here on top of the Temple, and make a 3-point landing in the Temple Courtyard – you do something this spectacular and they'll have to believe in you.

- “Hey, what's the matter – DON'T YOU TRUST GOD? – it says **right here in the Bible** that God will have his Angels protect you – don't you believe the Bible – don't you believe God?

5. In each and every instance, Jesus is being TEMPTED to take a **short cut** instead of answering his call to bring God’s message of love and relationship through earthly means.

6. In each of these instances, Jesus is being tempted **not to make the journey**.

## II. Our Wilderness

A. And in a way, each and every one of us is facing that same TEMPTATION too.

1. Oh we’re not tempted to change stones into bread – you can’t be tempted to do something you don’t have power to do.

2. But we are being tempted, to take a **short cut** – not to take the journey – not to spend time in the **wilderness**.

3. Writing in her most recent book, “Wholehearted Faith,” that we studied during Epiphany, **Rachel Held Evans** shares some thoughts about the **wilderness**.

4. She writes: “*Wilderness can be a place of refuge and a space of disquietude.*” [p.127]

5. “*The wildness,*” she continues, “*reminds us that things aren’t usually as simple or one-dimensional as they seem.*”

- “*Our stereotypes of such spaces imagine them as places of exile, spaces of lifelessness.*”

- “*That would be a surprise to the creatures that call it home.*” [133-4]

6. She goes on to say: “*Maybe the call of wilderness is to ask us to think more deeply, more broadly, more adventurously, more boldly, about the maybes.*”

7. “*Whenever Scripture takes us into the wilderness, it is usually not the barren wasteland that it at first seems. Over and over, God’s people are led to springs that flow with water, and somehow there is enough sustenance that shepherds can graze their livestock there.*” [p.135]

8. *“Maybe one of the lessons is that the wilderness is a place where we can’t rely on the familiar, which can seem like a hardship but might also be an invitation – an invitation into the reality of our existence, an invitation into the truth of our vulnerability.” [p.135]*

B. This Lent, we are invited to take the JOURNEY – to journey in the wilderness with Jesus.

1. Often when we are on a trip, Nancy and I will look for the little red lines on the map, or even better the black ones, and take a little longer route just to see what we will see – it’s a mysterious adventure.

2. For in a way, that’s what Lent is – a journey to see what we will see – a mysterious adventure;

- a mysterious adventure inside ourselves.

3. As I said before, Lent can be a time of refreshment;

- a time of self-discovery;

- a time of challenge;

- a journey inside ourselves.

4. And I think one of the reasons that we try to take so many **short cuts** and jump right to Easter – is that we don’t want to take that journey –

- but when we do, we’re all the better for it.

### III. The Journey

A. This Lent – let’s take the Journey?

1. Let’s go on that mysterious adventure deep within our hearts.

2. For Lent gives us the tools we need to make this Journey – as we shift our focus, and pay a little more attention to things like **prayer**, and **study**, and **self-denial**, or as the Lutherans put it, **works of love**.

3. There are plenty of opportunities for you to focus on your **Prayer** life as you might try attending a mid- week service, or watch the Lenten Taize service, or Celtic Prayer on Facebook, or just taking a little time at the beginning or end of your day to talk with God.

4. The same is true of **Study** as you might read a Gospel straight through or another Book of the Bible; and speaking of Books, you might look at one from our library and ponder a little spiritual reading this Lent.

5. And there are plenty of opportunities for **Works of Love** from the Food Programs, to offering to give someone else a ride, to programs in the Community as well.

6. It can be as simple as sponsoring someone for the CROP WALK or walking it yourself, or not spending as much on yourself and instead buying food for our food ministries – or making a donation to Episcopal Relief and Development – perhaps a gift for aid to Ukraine – the possibilities are endless when it comes to **works of love**.

B. And this Lent, we have lots of things here at St. Columba's to help you along your Journey as well.

1. Our **Joint Lenten Class** with Mount Cross focuses on “Embracing an Adult Faith;” as we will view a video talk by renowned theologian and teacher **Marcus Borg** and discuss the points he raises.

- We start Wednesday evenings at 5:00 at Mount Cross; with a Zoom version of the class on Thursday mornings at 11:00.

2. **Monday** evenings we are bringing back our *Lectio Divina* class to hear, explore, and pray our Lenten Gospel readings in a new and different way.

- We'll have some quiet focusing time from 7:00-7:15 and then the *Lectio* will be from 7:15- 8:00.

3. The **Labyrinth** is a wonderful way to think about your life's journey, and your spiritual journey, as you journey along the path to the center, and then bring those learnings out with you as you return to the world.

- If you'd like to walk the labyrinth and aren't sure how, we will have a special **Lenten Labyrinth Walk** on Saturday, March 19<sup>th</sup> beginning at 9:30.

4. As I mentioned earlier, the **Lent Table** in the Narthex has many other ideas and possibilities to take along the Journey.

5. There's an **Opportunities for Lent Brochure** on the table in the Narthex that explains these offerings in more detail.

- And if none of these seem to fit – then let's talk and we'll see what we might come up with.

## Conclusion

This Lent – let's take the Journey – that mysterious adventure deep within our hearts.

It's a long trip – it takes 40 days – and it has lots of twists and turns,  
- but it will have some amazing sights along the way.

It's a Journey to ourselves and with ourselves – going deep within ourselves and our relationship with God.

And remember, no short cuts.

## Let us Pray

Look with compassion, O Lord upon this your people; that rightly observing this Holy Season, they may learn to know you more fully, and to serve you with a more perfect will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(BOOS p.23)