

Sermon Lent 1 Year C

This Gospel lesson speaks to us profoundly of Jesus and does so most especially regarding his humanity. Just after he was baptized Jesus has gone out into the wilderness. It is good for us as we enter into the Lenten season to realize that Jesus faced the same sorts of temptations that face all of us humans. Had Jesus not been fully human then these temptations would have been no challenge for him at all. Satan says, “Jesus, you should take care of yourself. I know that you are hungry. Why not turn one of these useless rocks into a loaf of bread and have something to eat. It is not as if you are taking the bread away from someone else. Just this once do something for yourself. When that does not succeed the devil shows Jesus that all worldly power can be his by offering him authority over all kingdoms of the world. Again Jesus resists. The last temptation is for Jesus to leap off the top of the Temple so that God will be forced to save him. Jesus resists even that.

Jesus gives us a great example for us to follow during Lent. In my life there have been times when others needed my help and I chose just to take care of myself. There were times when I said that I was too tired to get out of bed and go help someone who needed my help, times when I said that I needed to meet my own needs.

In addition to understanding the temptation to meet my own physical needs, I can understand the temptation of wealth and power. When Jesus was shown the kingdoms of the world he was tempted in just this way. I can imagine thinking that I could use that kind of power to make the world a better place. I could give everyone a job, could house the homeless, could feed the hungry, could give everyone an education if I had all the power and wealth that Jesus was offered. Taking this offer could have made the world a much better place. Jesus could have made the kingdom that he would proclaim a reality in the world just by accepting worldly wealth and power. That was a real temptation I would imagine.

The same holds true for his leaping from the top of the temple. People would have seen angels appear and save Jesus from harm. He would have been the most famous person in Jerusalem. He could have used this to proclaim his

message. He could have used this so that no one would have doubted that he was the son of God. Everyone would have wanted to follow Jesus. All of the city would have become Christians in a day and all of Israel within a week.

I could certainly have justified giving in to each of these temptations. Of course the fact is that I made similar justifications for each time that I gave into the temptation to meet a physical need, or to seek power and money, or to achieve prominence and influence over others makes Jesus' resistance of these temptations an even greater example of me. I wish that I could say that I no longer am tempted by meeting my physical desires, by power, by money, or by fame, but that would be a lie. My plan for Lent is to consider Jesus' example and to apply it in two ways. One is to see those temptations for what they are and try to resist them, as they appeal only to my self-serving nature which is at odds with what Jesus teaches. The other is to ask for forgiveness for having given in to such temptations and to strive to undo the damage that doing so caused. It might be that you would wish to take a similar approach.

AMEN