

In His Place



Putting our hearts in Jesus' heart; our hands in Jesus' hands; moving beyond thinking into the realm of doing

Seeing through Jesus' eyes

How many of us feel like we are being tempted away from Jesus every day? With the Book of Luke we are given an example for resisting that temptation and living an exemplary Christian life in the person of Jesus. This week's focus will be on how Jesus resisted temptation and the methods that he showed us for living a Christian life.

Take a moment to read Luke 4:1-13. What are the three temptations that Jesus faced? Is there a time in the Gospel that Jesus does do the things that the devil is tempting him to do? Does the temptation have a parallel in the Hebrew Scriptures?

Each of these temptations works on more than one level. The first level addresses abuse of power and the second level is to show that Jesus would not use theatrical demonstrations. In other words, when Jesus performed a miracle it was not for his own gratification but for God's and that it helped those around him.

The first temptation is to turn stones into bread. Remember that Jesus had just spent 40 days in the desert and had not eaten. Jesus had the power to turn stone into bread but he refused to do it for his own good.

Think about the feeding of the 5,000, which appears in Luke 9:12-17 and the other three Gospels. According to Luke, Jesus took five loaves and two fish, "looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them," before distributing them to the crowd. When the leftovers were gathered 12 baskets of broken food remained. But something interesting occurs before this, Jesus tells the disciples: "You give them something to eat."

Inside this temptation is an allusion to Exodus 16:15, when the Israelites are being led across the desert by Moses and they first receive manna from God. Like the Israelites traveling across the desert who were tempted countless times, the 5,000 people who Jesus fed would not be satisfied merely by being fed one meal.

So when the devil tempts Jesus to turn stone into bread, Jesus replies "Man does not live on bread alone," which refers to Deut. 8:3.

In the second temptation Jesus is offered all the kingdoms of the world, if he will just worship

the devil. If Jesus will just worship Satan, then he will have earthly reign. But Jesus does not give in to idolatry, saying "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only," paraphrased from Deut. 6:13 and 10:20.

Yet Jesus as the Son of God gains authority over all the nations by remaining true to God. Think of it this way: Had Jesus given in to the devil for earthly authority, would we ever have heard of Jesus?

The third temptation has the devil telling Jesus that God will protect him if he throws himself from the pinnacle of the temple. Angels will protect Jesus "so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."

And Jesus responds: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test," which refers to Deut. 6:16. Yet we know that Jesus will indeed be harmed when he gives up his life on the cross.

What do all of the temptations have in common?

**First Week
of Lent
(Year C)**

Deuteronomy 16:1-11

Psalms 91:1-2, 9-16

Romans 10:8b-13

Luke 4:1-13

Trust in him and be saved

Deuteronomy 16:1-11

As Christians many of us wonder what observing the Feast of Passover has to do with us. Many of us just know it as the celebration that caused Jesus to travel to Jerusalem and that he was crucified prior to or during. We think that the Lord's Supper may have been a Passover celebration, but leave that to the biblical scholars to determine.

But there is something very important about the commands given at the end of this passage that have everything to do with us as Christians, inheritors of an Abrahamic faith:

"Then celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God by giving a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the LORD your God has given you. And rejoice before the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name — you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maid-servants, the Levites in your towns, and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows living among you."

You see we are to offer ourselves to others in measure to what we have been blessed and we are to welcome "outsiders" into our midst.

In the feeding of the 5,000 this means offering more than just bread — more than the charitable offerings of a baked dish for the soup kitchen or canned food gathered for the food bank. It means working for justice for those who have less than us.

In the United Methodist Book of Discipline 2004, it states "Every person has the right to a job at a living wage. Where the private sector cannot or does not provide jobs for all who seek and need them, it is the responsibility of government to provide for the creation of such jobs. We support social measures that ensure the physical and mental safety of workers, that provide for the equitable division of products and services, and that encourage an increasing freedom in the way individuals use their leisure time. ... We believe that persons come before profits." (BOD 115)

Becoming disciples

Monday

Read Exodus 16:15 and Luke 4:3-4. What is Jesus referring to when he says "Man does not live by bread alone?" According to Jesus is it enough to fill the stomachs of people without filling their souls?

Tuesday

Read Exodus 32 and Luke 4:5-8. Jewish people pray the Shema daily and Jesus refers to it when talking about the "greatest commandment." The Shema is: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord alone." How can it serve as a reminder for us to not serve idols?

Wednesday

Read Exodus 17:1-7 and Luke 4:9-12. The Israelites tested God by demanding water, Jesus would have tested God had he thrown himself from the pinnacle of the temple. How do you test God?

Romans 10:8b-13

"For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"

In the United Methodist Book of Discipline section on "The Social Community" there are categories marked "Rights of Racial and Ethnic Persons," "Rights of Religious Minorities," "Rights of Children," "Rights of Persons with Disabilities" and "Equal Rights Regardless of Sexual Orientation," among others. For pages we go on about how we are all equal before the Lord and how we advocate for equal rights, yet it was put so succinctly in Romans: "There is no difference ... 'Everyone who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"

At the General Board of Church and Society a small group of people work to ensure these rights for all people. Yet many people are unaware of the work done by the board or the books that they work from: the Book of Discipline and the Book of Resolutions, which are updated every four years. It is evidence that somebody at your church is aware of the work that the board does because you are involved in this study.

The board works on issues from immigration and worker justice to abolishing capital punishment and the war in Iraq, from health care to Darfur.

Find out more about the work being done by the board by visiting the Web site <http://www.umc-gbcs.org>. While you are there you can subscribe to the weekly e-newsletter, Faith in Action, and sign-on to petitions.

The building is housed across from the Supreme Court and the Capitol Building and offers seminars for people who travel to the building to learn more about the issues and the Methodist theology behind the stances.

Prayer

Morning

Dear God, every day I see temptations around me and I try to resist but too many times I give in. Help me to resist the way that Jesus did. Amen.

Evening

Almighty God, who has delivered us from slavery in Egypt, oppression in Rome and temptation through Jesus, help us as we recommit our lives to you so that we are no longer our greatest concern but that justice for others becomes our priority. Guide us as we strive to display the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Psalm reading

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

Write down a phrase that sticks out to you in the morning and carry it with you throughout the day. Think about it when you can.

If you are doing journaling write your thoughts about the phrase at night.

Pick a new phrase each day.

Thursday

"The first step toward authentic social justice begins with personal conversion — a continual growth in knowledge, love and service of Christ. We must become less self-absorbed and our lives more in communion with the poor. Personal conversion and the common good go hand in hand. Injustice is rooted in sin." — Gerard Straub, *When Did I See You Hungry?*

What does this mean to you?

Friday

"We believe in God, Creator of the world; and in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of creation. We believe in the Holy Spirit, through whom we acknowledge God's gifts, and we repent of our sin in misusing these gifts to idolatrous ends." — "Our Social Creed," paragraph 1 from Book of Discipline 2004, page 124.