**“*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.”***

(Luke 4:1-2 NIV)

It seems somewhat of an understatement as Luke recounts the temptations of Jesus and says that after fasting for forty days and nights he was hungry. Yet that is only a small part of this great story from which we derive our season of Lent.

Lent begins this year on March 1st. The entire month of March for us this year will be in the Lenten season. How will things turn out this year? I suggest you spend some time this Lenten Season by reading the accounts of the temptations of Jesus. To gain the best understanding of the context read the first four chapters of Matthew and Luke.

One thing we can count on is that, if we truly seek to find God in this Lenten season, we will be tempted. It has always amazed me at how the temptations of Jesus in the desert came about. In Matthew’s account, the temptations occur immediately after the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River by John. Yes, ministry and discipleship come with temptations. It is part of the package.

It is also interesting to note that Jesus is led into the desert by the Spirit – yes, the Spirit – to be tempted of God. Before the ministry of Jesus really gets started the Spirit leads Jesus into the desert to be tempted. In ministry and discipleship, God tries to prepare us for what is about to come by leading us to self-reflection and devotion.

It is also very significant to note that upon reaching the desert the greatest temptations do not begin immediately. It is in his weakened physical state that Satan comes to Jesus to tempt him with food and power. Yes, in ministry and discipleship our greatest temptations occur not when we are strong but when we are weak.

And finally, Jesus resists the temptations of Satan by quoting scripture. In ministry and discipleship our greatest tool is the Word of God.

To summarize:

* Jesus is announced to the world as the son of God and is baptized.
* He is led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted.
* Jesus fasts for forty days and forty nights to prepare himself for temptation.
* After he is hungry Jesus resists each and every one of the temptations of Satan by quoting scripture.

As we enter Lent this year let us do so realizing that this time of sacrifice and self-examination is a good thing. And let us prepare ourselves during this time to face the temptations which will surely come.

Design your Lenten journey in a way that is best for you. Fast. Give up sinful habits. Engage in activities that produce virtue and good will. Learn humility. And may we all emerge from this time ready for ministry and discipleship, rejoicing in the resurrection, and taking the Easter message into our daily lives with grace and mercy.

Have a blessed Lenten journey,

Pastor Tim