

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7

Psalm 32

Romans 5:12-19

Matthew 4:1-11

Sermon March 1st, 2020

God Is There for Us

On Ash Wednesday some of us gathered to receive ashes in the sign of a cross on our foreheads marking the beginning of our Lenten journey. A journey where we are reminded of our vulnerability as human beings. Our dependence on God for life. A journey where we hear the words, “you are dust and to dust you shall return.”

Reminding us of our mortality. A journey where we take forty days to more intentionally reflect on our relationship with God. A journey where we participate in ways to reconnect or grow closer to God. Whether it is give something up that interferes with our relationship with God or add something that helps us grow in relationship with God like trying to pray and/or read scripture more often. Or fast or act more generously towards others.

Today, we listen to the story in Genesis where our imperfections come to light. Where we are offered to disconnect from the one who created us and try and live in this world on our own terms. Or in other words, to turn away from God. A constant struggle we face in our day to day lives.

When Jesus is tempted by the devil to turn away from God we see that we too face similar challenges in our lives.

“Turn these stones into bread.” How often do we wrestle with trusting that God will provide for our needs? How often do we try and solve the problems we face in our lives ourselves? We want to be independent. We want to be able to take care of ourselves. Even if this means doubting what God can do in our lives. Ignoring the fact that we need God.

“Fall down and God will send down God’s angels to rescue you.” We may not put God to the test by jumping off a cliff. But, we may question God’s helpfulness when things go awry. We may convince ourselves that God is calling us to do what we want to do instead of actually listening to what God is wanting us to do.

“I will give you all this if you just worship me.” How often do we worship people or things other than God? We are filled with passion and desires, and sometimes these passions and desires are directed towards things other than God. It is hard all the time to put God first. This temptation is one we struggle with a lot. Martin Luther said all we need to do is look at the first Commandment and we will see our imperfections and our need for God, especially if we are going to be the loving people God calls us to be.

So, as we reflect on our relationship with God, we see that it is an imperfect relationship, because we cannot always avoid the temptations we face in our day to day lives. Sometimes we fall short. Sometimes we mess up. Sometimes we find ourselves turning away from God.

In response to our imperfections, Jesus comes into our lives and faces these temptations on our behalf. Jesus is able to overcome temptation and put the Creator first. What we see in our gospel this morning is an example to follow. But, much more, than this. What we see is Jesus coming into our lives and fulfilling the law on our behalf. Reflecting the grace of God in our lives. Hoping to turn our hearts back to a loving God who loves us despite our short comings. Moving us to love God and one another.

So, what we find on the road of our Lenten journey is a gracious God who is longing to be there for us. Who wants to be part of our lives. Who is inviting us into the sacred all the time. Who invites us to open the scriptures so we can hear God's redeeming love. Who invites us to worship so we can experience God's grace in the Word and Sacrament. Who invites us into prayer so we can hear God's gracious voice. Who invites us into relationship with one another so we can bear witness to the love of Christ.

God doesn't condemn us for our short comings. God wants to help us grow and be better. God breathes on us the Holy Spirit in our baptism so we can like Jesus overcome temptation and be the loving people God creates us to be. Yes, we may still stumble and fall a little, but by God's grace we are lifted up to try again. To grow in love for God and for one another.

So, as you walk along on your Lenten journey setting spiritual goals to try and live out during these forty days, remember that God is there longing to be part of your life. Longing to be in relationship with you. Inviting you back into the garden, before the serpent came along. The garden where we depended on God to provide for our wellbeing, and where we were okay with that. Where we were able to trust in God for everything in life.

Let us pray, loving God, we give thanks that you are there wanting to be part of our lives. Open our hearts to reach out to you with trust so that we grow in relationship with you and with one another. **Amen.**

© copyright, 2020, Wallace Bornhuse. All rights reserved.