

ASH WEDNESDAY AND MIDWEEK LENTEN SERVICES

The Lenten season may not be the longest season in the church year, but it is one of the most important seasons, if not the most important season of the year. It begins with a special day of repentance, Ash Wednesday, and ends in the depth of sorrow and tragedy on Good Friday. The name of the season, Lent, does not reflect the mood or message of the season. It is an old Anglo-Saxon word *Lencten* or *Lenchthen*, which means the lengthening of the days as spring appears.

In the first century, Lent was only a period of forty hours in keeping with the forty hours Jesus' body was in the tomb. The forty-hour observance ended with an Easter service at 3 a.m. Later, the forty hours grew into six days during the third century. These six days were known as Holy Week. The six days grew into thirty-six days, as a tithe of the 365 days of the year. By approximately 731, the time of Charlemagne, four days were added to the thirty-six to make the present season of forty days.

- ❖ **Ash Wednesday** – Joining together with Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Santa Monica at 6pm.

How to study the Bible?

Luther said he studied the Bible the way he gathered apples. First, he shook the whole tree, so that the ripest might fall. Then he climbed the tree and shook each limb, and when he had shaken each limb, he shook each branch, and after each branch every twig, and then he looked under each leaf. Let us search the Bible as a whole, shake the whole tree, read it as rapidly as we would read any other book; then shake every limb, studying book after book. Then shake every branch, giving attention to the chapters (when they do not break the sense.) Then shake every twig by careful study of the paragraphs and sentences, and you will be rewarded if you look under every leaf by searching the meaning of the words. (Ps. 119:105; Is 28:9; I Cor.14:20; II Tim.2:15; 3:14-17; Heb. 5:12-14; I Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18.)

Luke 4:1-13

English Standard Version

The Temptation of Jesus

4 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ²for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. ³The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” ⁴And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’” ⁵And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” ⁸And Jesus answered him, “It is written,

“You shall worship the Lord your God,
and him only shall you serve.”

⁹And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰for it is written,

“He will command his angels concerning you,
to guard you,’

¹¹ and

“On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.”

¹²And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ¹³And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

LENT 1

The Lessons

Deuteronomy 26:1-11 (C) Upon entering the Promised Land the people are to present the first fruits and to rejoice in Yahweh's goodness.

Deuteronomy 26:5-10 (L)

Deuteronomy 26:4-10 (RC)

Deuteronomy deals with the time of King Josiah's reforms in 621 B.C. One of the reforms was the centralization of worship in Jerusalem's temple. One of the three compulsory pilgrimages to Jerusalem was the Feast of Weeks when a basket of first fruits was presented to the priest, placed before the altar, and the worshiper responded by re-telling the account of the Exodus. After reciting this "creed" the faithful were to worship with rejoicing and thanksgiving. Biblical scholars claim that this is the most important passage in the Old Testament because it summarizes the mighty acts of Yahweh in Israel's behalf.

Romans 10:8b-13 (C, L) They who confess Jesus is Lord will be saved.

Romans 10:8-13 (RC)

Paul repeats the point he made in chapter 3 of Romans that salvation is not by works of the Law but by faith in Christ. That faith is belief in Christ as Lord who was raised from the dead. This faith results in justification and the confession of that faith means salvation. Faith involves expression as confession. Salvation will come to those who through confession call upon Christ for salvation.

Luke 4:1-13 Jesus overcomes temptation in the wilderness.

The temptation in the wilderness for a long period of time (forty days) was a time for Jesus to make a choice how he was going to carry out his mission which he had just learned at his baptism — "beloved Son." Shall he use wealth, power, or fame to save the world? None of these was accepted. He would be God's suffering servant, a humble king of truth, love, and peace. Differing from the other evangelists, Luke reports that Satan was not done with Jesus. He left Jesus until another "opportune time."

Theological Reflections

Gospel: Luke 4:1-13

1. *Spirit (1)*. One of the distinctive marks of Luke's account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness is his emphasis on the Spirit. The temptation immediately follows Jesus' baptism when the Spirit came upon him like a dove. Luke describes Jesus as "full of the Holy Spirit" as he enters the wilderness. Because of this, Jesus has the wisdom and power to withstand Satan. What gives us difficulty, however, is Luke's claim that Jesus "was led by the Spirit" to the wilderness for temptation. In the Lord's Prayer Jesus taught us to say, "Lead us not into temptation." Some Biblical scholars translate the phrase "led *in* the Spirit" rather than *by* the Spirit. This translation seems to overcome the difficulty.

2. *Delivered (v. 6)*. Satan claims that the world has been delivered to him and therefore he can give the world to Jesus. This is one of Satan's many lies. Indeed, there is much evidence that evil flourishes in the world and corrupts the world. Thus, in one of his letters John tells us not to love the world. Nevertheless, this is our Father's world. It is not essentially evil but everything God made is good. God never gave the world to Satan even though he is in the world causing it to groan in travail.

3. *Opportune (v. 13)*. Luke tells us this was not the only time Jesus was tempted. Satan lost the battle in the wilderness but he still thinks he can win the war with God. Repeatedly Satan tempted Jesus throughout his ministry: (1) When Peter tempted him not to go to Jerusalem to die; (2) When the people came to make him king of the nation; (3) When Jesus struggled in Gethsemane to know the will of God; (4) When he was challenged to come down from the cross to prove who he was. Temptation is a common and universal part of life and it continues throughout life.

Lesson 1: Deuteronomy 26:1-11

1. *First (v. 2)*. Moses commands the people to bring a basket of fruit to the temple for the annual Feast of Weeks. The fruit is to be the first of the harvest. It is appropriate that God should get the first fruits because he must be first in our lives to be our God. Moreover, the first fruits are the very best, and God deserves the best we can offer.

2. *Given (v. 10)*. The donor in dedicating the offering acknowledges that what is being given was first given by God to us. "We give Thee but Thine own." All that we are and have has come from God. We are not really giving God anything, for what do we have that was not given to us? To give something back to God indicates our acknowledgment that he is the author of all we have and that we are grateful.

In the Morning

I thank you, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.