



Grain

“Any theology that is indifferent to the theme of liberation is not Christian theology.” –James Cone

Field

4Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ²where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. ³The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” ⁴Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’” ⁵Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And the devil said to him, “To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” ⁸Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’” ⁹Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying 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 protect you,’ ¹¹and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’” ¹²Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ¹³When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time. Luke 4:1-13

Thoughts

As leaders in Russia are trying to crush and defeat the people of Ukraine, we have a Gospel story about Jesus tested in the wilderness. Which powers would Jesus listen to? What type of Messiah would he be? It might seem obvious that Jesus should say no to destructive powers, just as the blatant greed-driven leadership of a country invading innocent people calls upon what is good in us to say, No. But temptations we face in ourselves and our response to unjust systems are not always clear in each moment.

The wilderness may have been a place of solitude but it had wildlife, all of which wasn't friendly. Maybe if anxiety overtook Jesus he'd start to manufacture or fear beasts that weren't actually there. How could he feel secure in that environment? Hungry and at least as alone as some have felt during the pandemic, Jesus was surrounded by loud voices trying to seduce him into grabbing for easy answers and greedy power. In the wilderness, he shared our humanity and gained compassion for what tempts us away from God. As on the cross, when evil would have a more opportune time, Jesus showed another way, where we can always return and trust.

The temptation of greed and of belonging at the cost of harming others can be seductive. We recognize the temptation in ourselves and in systems that prevent people from having a voice, create hurdles for students to be educated about our actual history, and that ignite war. Let us enter Lent as people who know the grace of another way, recalling the power of trusting God. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy