*Luke 4:1-13 ~ March 9, 2025*

***Call to Worship:***

We live in the shelter of the Most High,

**We abide in the shadow of Almighty God.**

Let us worship God who is our refuge and our strength,

**For God is the One in whom we trust.**

The Lord will deliver us from the perils that threaten us.

**Under God’s wings, we will find refuge and not be afraid.**

So let us praise God, in song and in silence, with thankful hearts!

**We will worship God with heart, mind, soul and strength, now and always.**

*Hymn: #*328 This is my Father’s world

***Prayer of Approach and Confession:***

Holy and merciful God

you are our refuge and strength,

we rejoice in your grace and love

which has called creation into being,

and makes all life complete.

We praise you for Jesus Christ

who reveals your loving purposes for all people;

in his face we glimpse your love;

in his life we see the pattern for our lives.

We bless you for the Holy Spirit

who guides us and strengthens us,

drawing us into the embrace of your tender love.

And so we praise you, O God,

our eternal, creating father who loves us with motherly care,

united with Christ, our saviour,

and your Holy Spirit, the breath of life,

Three in One, now and always.

Almighty and most merciful God,

we confess that we have sinned against you

in things we have done,

and things we have neglected to do.

We have held back from giving

to protect what we have.

We have not trusted in your goodness

and relied on the world’s empty promises instead.

Forgive what we have done and direct who we shall become.

Help us to serve you

by serving your world with generous spirits.

***Assurance of Pardon*:**

Hear and believe the good news! Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation.

The old life is gone. The new life has come. Know that you are forgiven, and so, in Christ, forgive one another.

*Hymn: #*625 Seek ye first

***Anthem:***

***Scripture Reading:*** *Deuteronomy 26:1-11*

When you have entered the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, **2**take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the Lord your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name **3**and say to the priest in office at the time, “I declare today to the Lord your God that I have come to the land the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.” **4**The priest shall take the basket from your hands and set it down in front of the altar of the Lord your God. **5**Then you shall declare before the Lord your God: “My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. **6**But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, subjecting us to harsh labor. **7**Then we cried out to the Lord, the God of our ancestors, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. **8**So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. **9**He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; **10**and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, Lord, have given me.” Place the basket before the Lord your God and bow down before him. **11**Then you and the Levites and the foreigners residing among you shall rejoice in all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household.

*Luke 4:1-13*

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, **2**where for forty days he was tempted[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204%3A1-13&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25066a)] by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

**3**The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”

**4**Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204%3A1-13&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25068b)]”

**5**The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. **6**And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. **7**If you worship me, it will all be yours.”

**8**Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204%3A1-13&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25072c)]”

**9**The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. **10**For it is written:

“‘He will command his angels concerning you
    to guard you carefully;
**11**they will lift you up in their hands,
    so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204%3A1-13&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25075d)]”

**12**Jesus answered, “It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204%3A1-13&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25076e)]”

**13**When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

***Meditation:****“The Way”*

When I say the word Jesus what kind of mental picture comes into your mind? Close your eyes for just a second, don’t fall asleep, what kind of picture flashes in your mind’s eye at the sound of the word Jesus? Do you picture Jesus as most artist do, a man with long flowing hair, with smooth complexion, with every piece of hair in place, and him never needing a shave? Or do you picture him walking along the dusty, dirty roads of Galilee, with his feet getting all dirty from his open sandals, his brow wet with sweat from the heat, his clothes wrinkled and worn, his face lined with the signs of age. His hands with callous from working in his father’s carpenter shop, and his face with a 5 o’clock shadow? How do you picture this Jesus?? Do you see him as somehow always having a hallow or a ring of light around his head as some artists see him?

Sometimes I have spiritualized him to such an extent, that I forget he was a man, a human being, an historical person who walked this earth who did the kinds of things human beings do. Jesus Christ was true man, and true God. As a man, as a human being he felt, he experienced, he encountered all the emotions, all the senses, all the circumstances that we feel in life. He ate, he drank, he slept, he got dirty, he needed a bath, he prayed, he cried, he gave thanks, he worshiped. Jesus did and experienced all the things you and I experience in this life.

And as our gospel text tells us this morning, he even experienced temptation. Jesus was tempted as you and I are tempted. Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by the devil after he had fasted for forty days. Forty-day without food or drink in the wilderness that was such a forsaken place that people would avoid it whenever possible. Jesus was tempted by the devil to take the easy way out. He was tempted not so much with doing something evil, but with taking the easy way out.

The first temptation was to change stones into bread. This temptation really seemed like a good idea, give the people what they think they need, food. Become the bread, Messiah, feed the hungry people of the world, satisfy their need for the basic thing of life food, then they will follow you, then you will have no problem getting the people to follow. Jesus was tempted with giving the people what they wanted instead of what they needed. Sure, the people wanted food, but Jesus knew they needed more than food, they needed his spiritual food, they needed to listen to his teaching not because he bribed them with food, because he offered them life, eternal life.

The second temptation was even more dramatic. The devil asked Jesus to worship him, then the devil would give Jesus the authority over all the earthly kingdoms. Jesus would be in charge of every kingdom of the earth. Jesus would be the one who would run every country. With Jesus in control of the world’s power, peace would be certain, and an equal distribution of wealth would be immediate. Isn’t this a great idea? Jesus could take the easy way out, acknowledge the devil’s control of the earth, then he could change the course of history.

But Jesus knew he would change the course of history in a far more dramatic way. He would die on a cross and then God would raise him from the dead defeating the devil’s control of this earth. Then Jesus working through his church would bring peace and an equal distribution of wealth, but all of this would be a long, drawn-out struggle. Jesus was tempted to take the easy way out, to avoid the cross, and to do the changes of this world himself instead of working through his people, the church. Sometimes this temptation is very difficult for us to defeat. Sometimes it is easier to do things ourselves.

The third temptation was the most dramatic. The devil had another way for Jesus to serve as the Son of God: "Dive off the temple tower and let God perform a dramatic rescue," This event would show that God could be manipulated to do what we want and need. He is at our service. Such a message would be appealing to the masses, for we like to hear that God will keep us successful and happy. Take the easy way out and have God serve you instead of you serving God.

This last temptation wasn’t really something so evil, not like stealing or killing or things like that, was it. But the subtleness of this temptation is even more damning. For this temptation is asking us to accept our will, our position before God instead of his. It asks us to be a salesman, a trader, a bargainer with God. Well, God will do this if you do that. Doesn’t sound so bad, does it? But it is. For this temptation places us in control of our salvation, it places us in control of pleasing God, it places God at our mercy, instead of the other way around. God is the one who is in control, God is in charge of our salvation, God gives eternal life to us as a free gift, not as payment for good deeds.

Yes, Jesus was tempted, tempted not by doing something so awful, but by taking the easy way out. By taking the easy road instead of the difficult road of service, sacrifice and death. But these temptation didn’t stop here in the wilderness. Jesus was tempted to take the easy way right up to the moment of his death. But we know Jesus didn’t take the easy way, he took the way of the cross.

There was a little boy in a grocery story. The boy was standing near an open box of peanut cookies.
"Now then, my lad," said the grocer as he approached the lad.
"What are you up to?"
"Nothing," replied the boy
“Nothing?"
"Well, it looks to me as if you were trying to take a cookie?"
"You’re wrong, mister. I’m trying not to."

Do we try to take the easy way out, the way that doesn’t seem so bad, but is much easier???

I think all of us have fallen into this trap of taking the easy way out. I know I have and probably more often than I should have. The road that Jesus calls us to follow is a narrow road, a road that is not easy, but difficult. A road where we are to follow him instead of ourselves, a road that asks us to sacrifice ourselves, our time and our energy for him. Jesus asks us to travel the hard road, because at the end of that road is our final reward, it is heaven, it is eternity with him. Amen.

***Invitation of Offering:***

We all have something to share. As we present our offering this morning, know that what we share enables the Church to reach out in Jesus’ name, meeting needs, offering hope, and working for the justice Jesus proclaimed*.*

***Doxology: #****830 Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow*

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

***Prayer of Dedication:***

Generous God, we thank you for all the goodness we receive in Christ and in creation. Bless the gifts we offer to share in the work of the kingdom Jesus declared, and bless our lives so that we may be witnesses to his love and mercy.

*Hymn: #534 All who hunger gather gladly*

***Invitation to the Lord’s Table:***

Jesus said:

 I am the bread of life.

 Those who come to me will never be hungry,

 and those who believe in me will never be thirsty.

 No one who comes to me will I drive away. John 6:35, 37.

 Because there is one bread,

 we who are many are one body,

 for we all partake of the one bread. I Cor. 10:17.

 So, whether you eat or drink,

 or whatever you do,

 do everything for the glory of God. I Cor. 10:31.

**The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving:**

The Lord be with you.

 **And also with you**.

Lift up your hearts.

 **We lift them to the Lord**.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

 **It is right to give God thanks and praise**.

Holy God, Creator of heaven and earth,

with joy we give you thanks and praise.

Through the words of your prophets

you gave your people hope

by promising them the Redeemer.

And now we rejoice that in your Son, Jesus Christ,

the Saviour has come

and will come again in power and glory

making all things new.

How wonderful are your ways, almighty God.

How marvellous is your name, O Holy One.

You alone are God.

Therefore with apostles and prophets,

and that great cloud of witnesses

who live for you beyond all time and space,

we lift our hearts in joyful praise:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,**

**heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

 **Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**

 **Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise you, most holy God,

for sending your only Son Jesus to live among us,

full of grace and truth.

Sharing our joy and sorrow,

he healed the sick and was a friend of sinners.

Obeying you,

he took up his cross and died that we might live.

We praise you that he overcame death

and is risen to rule the world.

He is still the friend of sinners.

We trust him to overcome every power that can hurt or divide us,

and believe that when he comes in glory

we will celebrate victory with him.

Therefore, in remembrance of your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,

we take this bread and this cup

and give you praise and thanksgiving

as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

 **Christ has died,**

 **Christ is risen,**

 **Christ will come again**.

Gracious God,

pour out your Holy Spirit upon us,

and upon this bread and wine,

that we, and all who share this feast,

may be one with Christ and he with us.

Here we offer ourselves to be a living sacrifice,

holy and acceptable to you.

In your mercy,

accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

Fill us with the joy of eternal life,

that we may be your faithful people

until we feast with you in glory.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

all glory and honour are yours, almighty God,

for ever and ever. **Amen**.

***Communion:***

On the night he was betrayed, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take, eat; this is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” After supper he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins; do this, as often as you drink of it, in remembrance of me.” Amen. *(1 Cor. 11:23-26)*

Come let us eat and drink in remembrance of Christ:

**The Breaking of the Bread:**

 We thank you that on the night before he died,

 Jesus took bread, gave thanks to you,

 broke the bread and said

 "Take, eat.

 This is my body, given for you.

 Do this for the remembrance of me."

Because there is one bread,

we who are many are one body,

for we all partake of the one bread. *I Cor. 10:17*.

**The Serving of the Cup:**

In the same way he took the cup, saying,

 "This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood.

 Do this for the remembrance of me."

The cup of salvation.

**Amen.**

***Prayer after Communion:***

Loving God, Christ our Lord, Holy Spirit,

you have nourished us, body and soul, in this meal.

We have heard your love, so send us out to speak it.

We have seen your love, so send us out to show it.

We have been fed by your love, so send us out to share it.

So may we become Christ’s body, the Church,

loving and caring throughout the whole world

until that day when all creation feasts with you

in the fullness of your mercy and peace

that we savour today in the name of our Saviour

who taught us when we pray to say together:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth,
As it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power, and the glory,
For ever and ever.
Amen.

 *Hymn: #*647 Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us

***Benediction:***

Go in peace; be of good courage, hold fast to what is good, render no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted, support the weak, help the afflicted, honour all people, love and serve the God.

Now may the LORD keep us and bless us,

May the LORD make his face to shine upon us

and be gracious unto us,

Now and for ever more, AMEN.

***Choral Closing: “Go Now in Peace”***

Go now in peace. Never be afraid.
God will go with you each hour of every day.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.
Know He will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love, and show you believe.
Reach out to others so all the world can see.
God will be there watching from above.
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.