

First Sunday of Lent – March 10, 2019

Deuteronomy 26: 4-10 Romans 10:8-13 Luke 4: 1-3

It is the tradition of the Church to recall, on the First Sunday of Lent, one of the Gospel accounts of what is known as “The Temptations of Christ.” Before beginning his ministry, Jesus takes time to seek the solitude of the desert in order to reflect and to pray. During this time, as the Gospel accounts tell us, he is presented with questions, described as temptation, as to how best to carry on his ministry.



I have to admit that I often have listened to these accounts as a spectator. I have observed Jesus and his reactions as he is presented with these options. Perhaps, however, especially as we begin the Season of Lent, we can consider this event, within the context of Luke’s account, as a way of presenting to us questions on how we might respond to what we will hear and observe in the ministry of Jesus and, in particular, to his eventual death and resurrection which we recall some six weeks from now. This approach opens for us a source for our own thoughts during Lent. What options are presented to Jesus and how did he respond? What options do these suggest to us and how do we respond?

If we think of it, all that was put before Jesus were good in themselves. But the question is, does the manner in which they

are used provide a revelation of God or merely the opportunity to satisfy a selfish desire. In itself, bread is a good thing to be fed when we are hungry. Authority gives the ability to bring about change. Protection from danger allows for a sense of security and reassurance.

What is the temptation in these? The temptation is to focus on a reliance on self rather than a reliance on the goodness of God. It is to think that to be fed, to bring about change, to be protected – these are things that I will do, I will accomplish on my own. The reality of God is ignored. Trust in God is discarded. It is me, and only me, that will provide these things.

We also heard a passage from the Book of Deuteronomy in which the Israelites were urged to recall their pain and suffering with which they contended while enslaved in Egypt. Then they were to remember that their deliverance from this status came about not through their own actions but by faith and trust in God. It was in gratitude for this that they were urged to make offerings from their abundance.

At the beginning of the Season of Lent we are challenged. This does not come simply from the image of Jesus confronting temptations. Rather we are to reflect on how we have been tempted, how we may have succumbed to temptation. We may have been tempted not to rely on the goodness of God being present with us in whatever hunger we might have or not to rely on a trust in the goodness of God to be with us in whenever development or growth or change encountered or not to rely on the goodness of God to safeguard us from genuine harm of mind and spirit.

Take time now to reflect on the past as the Israelites were called to do. Take time to recognize God's presence with us now. Take time to respond, as Jesus did, with trust and confidence in the enduring presence of our good and gracious God.