

An EXEGESIS—EB13
February 21, 2021
The First Sunday in Lent

For Faith Sharing—Gospel: [Mark1:12-15](#)

Theme: Lent is a time to open our hearts more fully to Jesus.

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him. After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

Also, the Gospel of Luke is helpful: [Luke 4:1-13](#)

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry. The devil said to him, “**If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.**” Jesus answered him, “**It is written, One does not live on bread alone.**” Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. The devil said to him, “I shall give to you all this power and glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. **All this will be yours, if you worship me.**” Jesus said to him in reply, “**It is written: You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.**” Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, “**If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here,** for it is written: *He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you, and: With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.*” Jesus said to him in reply, “**It also says, You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.**” When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

SCRIPTURAL NOTE: Note that Jesus is led into the desert by the Spirit of God. The purpose is not to lead him to do evil, but as a **testing** of his fitness for his coming mission. He has been in the desert fasting. He is alone, hungry, weak and vulnerable. The testing will be done by the Evil One, the Tempter. Each of these three temptations touches on Jesus’ identity as the Son of God, which has been revealed at his baptism.

The first temptation is to use his divine powers to turn stones into bread. Tests like this come under the guise of something good. Jesus rejects the offer by saying that it is not by bread alone that we live. True happiness does not consist in satisfying material wants, but rather it consists in **identifying ourselves fully with the vision of life which God gives us through Jesus.**

Satan’s next approach is to bring Jesus to the highest point of the Temple of Jerusalem, God’s dwelling place. Surely God will take care of his Son. Satan cleverly quotes Scripture that God would not allow Jesus to be hurt. Satan says that if Jesus is miraculously saved by God’s angels, everyone will know his divine origin and come to believe in him. But God promises providential care in the normal course of our lives, but never when we do something unreasonable. Jesus quotes Scripture in reply, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”

After the failure of the first two attempts, Satan now drops all pretense and suggests that if Jesus falls down and worships him, all the kingdoms of the world will be his. This is a fool’s bargain. Yet, this is a bargain we constantly try to make when we wish to belong to God, but then **go to any lengths to get the things WE want: material wealth, success, prestige in the eyes of others, power.** Jesus roundly rejects this third offer from Satan.

Jesus passes all three tests and will continue to do so all his life [Frank Doyle, SJ, 1st Sunday of Lent]

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1. **Question:** The temptations that came to Jesus could only come to one who knew that there were amazing things which he could do with his special gifts, with his strengths. How are we, too, tempted through our strengths?
2. **Question:** How is a person gifted **with charm** tested? How may a person gifted **with the power of words and persuasion** tested? How may a person gifted **with a vivid imagination** be tested? How may a person with **great gifts of intelligence** be tested?
3. **Question:** **What message** is Jesus telling us about how to weather our temptations?
4. **Question:** What is at the heart of Jesus' temptation to turn round stones into bread?
5. **Question:** What are the four hungers of the human heart?
6. **Question:** What are some of the appeals used by the media to persuade us to participate in the world's values today?
7. **Question:** What is the good news Jesus brings to our world?
8. **Question:** What does Jesus mean when he says, "Repent?"
9. **Question:** Is there a prayer one can use for strength in temptation?

Q1. We must always remember that again and again we are tempted through our strengths, our gifts. When we take these gifts for granted, we delude ourselves into thinking that **we are powerful**. We fall victim to **pride and self-sufficiency**. We forget that we did not create ourselves. We forget that we were given these gifts by God. **It is when we feel strongest that we are most vulnerable to temptation.** [Wm Barclay, Matt 4, p 66, 67]

Q2. The person with **charm** will be tempted to "**get away with anything**." The person with the **power of words** will be tempted **to produce glib excuses** to justify his/her own conduct. The person with **great gifts of mind** will be tempted **to use these gifts for himself/herself and not for others, to become a master and not a servant of men**. It is just where we are strongest that we must be ever on the watch. [ibid, 66]

Q3. This story is Jesus telling us his own spiritual autobiography. He is laying bare his heart and soul. He is telling us that he can help others who are tempted because he himself was tempted. **He is our help in our struggles. He teaches us to pray when we are tempted.** When we turn to God, we are less apt to take our gifts for granted and more likely to thank Him in humble gratitude for our gifts. Jesuits take time each day in their **daily examen** to realize that all, even our own daily existence, is a gift from God. This daily practice is a powerful antidote to temptation. [ibid, 66] [SEE attachment EB13a, The Jesuit Examen]

Q4. This is a temptation **to use his powers selfishly for his own use**. This temptation to turn stones to bread to feed others is so contrary to **the life Jesus would call men to live, a life of giving, not of getting**. It would have been a mistake to bribe men to follow him for the sake of what they could get out of it. The reward Jesus had to offer was the Cross. Secondly, to comply would be to remove the symptoms of human hunger without dealing with the disease. Men were hungry because of their own foolishness and carelessness. **The hunger of the heart is not in material things.** [ibid, 67]

Q5. As Peter Kreeft nicely puts it in his excellent little book *Back to Virtue*, there are four hungers of the human heart. So, what are these four hungers of the human heart?

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Physical hunger. We hunger for food and drink and do so every day. We could not survive without these basic needs for very long. This is a hunger we share with lower creation as well. Add to this some of our basic needs for shelter and clothes and a few toys and many will rest satisfied, dubbing the possession of such things as a state of blessedness. Still the cracks remain, even if plastered over with food and drink and the luxuries that money buys. Listen . . . and we'll find another hunger deeper in:

The hunger for truth, goodness, and beauty. As Aristotle put it, all men desire to know. As prophets and moralists cry out, we all desire to experience happiness—goodness—in a world gone wrong. As poets and artists demonstrate, we all long for a beauty that captivates. We hunger, as Kreeft puts it, for the effect or gift that is truth, goodness, and beauty. Often we find the gift and seek asking questions about the giver behind the gift. But, if we push through and pay attention, we will find our third hunger:

Spiritual hunger for God. We hunger for **the source of truth, goodness, and beauty**—we hunger for righteousness. We follow Plato out of the cave and seek the light of the sun, and in seeking, we find the Son. And in finding the Son, we are captured by a fourth hunger:

God's hunger for us. God hungers and thirsts for people to enter his Kingdom—to be lovers of others who spend and not take, who give instead of getting. This is the paradoxical nature of faith—in order to find your life, **you must lose it**; in order to be blessed, **you must give**; in order to be filled with righteousness, **you must spend your life following after the Son**. Be the hands and feet of God to a hungry world. Spend your life. And be blessed. [Paul Gould at <http://www.paul-gould.com/2014/09/24/mans-four-hungers/>]

Q6. Today's popular Postmodern culture lures us with many temptations: to deny the existence of moral standards of behavior (moral relativism), to pursue power, prestige, or privilege; to use dirty tricks to get elected; to cheat in school for a better grade or to cheat in life for monetary gain; to choose to act such that the end justifies the means; to engage in reckless behavior with drugs, alcohol, or sex; to suggest that God is dead; to attack the sanctity and reverence of human life by abortion, to play God and euthanize elderly people via assisted suicide, to get us to focus on what is seen versus what is unseen and spiritual, to pursue a life of pleasure, ease and comfort rather than one of service to others etc, etc.

Q7. Jesus' good news is news **of God's truth**. With the coming of Jesus men see clearly what God is like. It is the **good news of hope**. Jesus brings hope to the hopeless heart. It is the **good news of peace**. In human nature the beast and the angel are intermingled. Man has always been haunted both by sin and by goodness. Jesus brings the **good news of redemption from sin, death and Satan's power**. He brings the **good news of immortality**. Jesus came with the news that **we follow Him on the way to eternal life** rather than to death. He proved God's power over death with His resurrection.

Q8. The story of Noah and the Ark covers a four-fold pattern throughout the history of Israel: (1) God creates, (2) human sin affects that creation, (3) destruction ensues and (4) God recreates. The Greek word for "repent" is "**metanoia**," "**a change of mind, a change of heart, a transformative conversion of life, a spiritual conversion**." Repentance is not so easy as we sometimes think. We are **apt to confuse sorrow for consequences of sin** rather than sorrow for sin. It is not so much the sin we hate as its consequences. Sin disrupts the

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lives of the sinner and of others. Real repentance means that a person has come not only to be sorry for the consequences of his/her sin, **but also to hate the sin itself** because of its exceeding evilness and the distance it puts between us and the God of Goodness.

Q9. In times of trouble or temptation the reader might find in the words of the Oslo Gospel Choir's hymn, ***In Your Arms***, a helpful hymn/prayer for strength against the Enemy. And the orchestration is heavenly.

In Your Arms

Oslo Gospel Choir Tore Wilhelm Aas

YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZhO0X8HSjY>

REFRAIN

Through the storms of life lead me into your light
Give my heart a new song when I'm weak make me strong
By your word lead me into pastures of peace
Hold me close, safely rest in your arms

Through the storms of life lead me into your light
Give my heart a new song when I'm weak make me strong
By your word lead me into pastures of peace
Hold me close, safely rest in your arms

V1. You're my redeemer and amazing grace
My fortress, and my hiding place
You're my deliverer and my solid rock
My souls desire is in you

REFRAIN...

V2. Through all creation your ways are known
'Cause you are the God who's God alone
You're God alone
Let every, let every nation and let every tongue
Confess that you are Lord of all

Through the storms of life lead me into your light
Give my heart a new song when I'm weak make me strong
By your word lead me into pastures of peace
Hold me close, safely rest in your arms

By your word lead me into pastures of peace
Hold me close, safely rest in your arms
Hold me close, safely rest in your arms

The Bible says (Psalm 146:1) "God is our very first help in times of trouble. And (Psalm 119:105) says, "He is our Life and our Salvation, a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. He has put a new song into our mouths. Give praise to our God."