

DO YOU HAVE THE TIME?
“Time to Take Charge”
1st Sunday of Lent
February 18, 2018
Pastor Dea Sharp, Pikes Peak UMC

Mark 1:9-15 (NRSV)

The Baptism of Jesus

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; ^[a]with you I am well pleased.”

The Temptation of Jesus

¹²And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news ^[b] of God, ^[c] ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; ^[d] repent, and believe in the good news.” ^[e]

I don't usually do sermon series'.

But, last year, the conference's worship training compiled a series for Lent that uses the lectionary. So, I'm good with that!

What better time, than Lent, to step out of my comfort zone, USING the prescribed readings, to encourage YOU to step out of YOUR comfort zones as we take our faith walk, to Easter.

I'll say, too, that the Youth (and those of you with a little comfort with smart phones), may add some refreshing perspective to our walk.

I think you'd agree with me (even the Youth) that too often we don't have time to do the things we want to be doing.

Do you ever feel like time is passing you by?

Or that all the busyness in life overrules time for deliberate prayer and Scripture reading with God?

The truth is, TIME is a limited commodity, isn't it?

We're challenged to spend it in the right ways on the right things.

The focus of the series started with the verses in Ecclesiastes 3 that say “there's a right time” for everything.

Perhaps this Lent is the “right time” to slow down and see what God is doing.

And even more importantly, to make the MOST OF OUR TIME with God and others.

Initially, I thought that my smart phone was a time USER rather than making me more efficient.

There are things in here W-A-Y beyond dialing the phone!

With practice, though, the apps DO help me keep track of time.

There's a calendar. AND a clock, a timer, a stop watch **AND** an alarm.

That's plenty of ways to keep track of time!

But, if I'm not careful this pocket-full-of-tools, I am robbed of precious moments.

It isn't inherently bad, but it is OH SO TEMPTING to lose sight of what is important.

In fact, Gene had to point that out at dinner the other night.

Sometimes I wonder if it would be easier for us to observe Lent if we weren't so distracted by our everyday lives.

Our best intentions to **fast** more and **give** more and **pray** more would be easier if we weren't **tempted** by distractions!

SO: speaking of **being tempted**, today's Scripture verses are familiar.

We start Lent, every year, hearing the story of Jesus being led into the desert by the Spirit, to face Satan in 40 days of temptation.

We can't ever suggest that Jesus had an easy time in the wilderness.

Satan throws temptation after temptation at Jesus.

And Jesus combats every temptation with Scripture; refusing to take Satan's bait.

See, Jesus had solid footing before he set ONE foot in the desert.

He had been and was intentional with his time of prayer and study before "The Hinderer" (that's what Satan's name means) could even begin the struggles.

Satan tried to "stand in the way" and block Jesus' progress.

Ever feel like that happens to you?

One of the most appealing aspects of this particular Bible story is the way God "gets" *humanness*.

Ours.

God understands this because God came to earth in human form as Jesus and felt temptation and brokenness.

We spend 40 days during Lent focusing on these things, but the truth is, we experience them 365 days a year.

There's always something trying to pull us away from God and weaken our faith!

While we don't literally face Satan in the wilderness, full of literal beasts and physical hunger, we do face distractions (like when our phones beep that a message has come or it's time to do a task.) Those distractions can things pull us way from the focus we want to be having, especially for Lent, and, I pray, for those other 325 days of the year.

During our Ash Wednesday service I reminded all of us that we can face temptation.

We can confront our brokenness and focus intentionally on those temptations and, like Jesus, overcome them.

When we apply the *self-control* of prayer and giving and fasting, we're going to be able to, (AND TAKE THIS AS A POSITIVE, GROWING EXPERIENCE,) acknowledge the need for change because we know that God not only understands the depths of our struggles, but also the depth of our desire to be better.

And as the message title says: **It's time to take charge!**

To be changed, not because we're bad people, but because we are very human people.

We begin Lent by hearing the story of Jesus' time in the wilderness because it helps US reflect on the temptations we face every day.

Fasting might not JUST be from the temptations of food but other "addictions" like drugs, alcohol, gossip, social media, shopping, technology use and other habits we struggle to gain control over.

Some of us may be struggling with the simple notion of balance and moderation; others of us face far deeper struggles.

We're broken.

And there's no shame in being tempted. There is when we give in; but not in the temptation.

Scripture shows us that Jesus was tempted – but HE TOOK CHARGE!

We have to too!

We have to do the hard work of Lent that is required us to look inward, make changes in our lives to strengthen our faith and to **allow God** to make us whole.

Our temptation and our sin, and our human imperfections are all very real things. We can take charge and own that; and recognize that they're also the very reason we need God to help us make the changes!

Jesus struggled (like we do OFTEN) to define what God wants and what God desires of us.

But remember, Jesus was NOT alone in the wilderness.

Remember? It says, "and the angels waited on him."

Which is a wonderful reminder that we are NOT alone in our struggles either.

Not only are we on AND IN this walk of faith with each other; but God is walking with us, too.

God's grace can be found when we expose our temptations; bring them out of the darkness and into God's divine light.

We can take charge and use Lent as an opportunity to find God's grace.

Lent actually creates a safe space where we're allowed to be the most vulnerable and messy versions of ourselves and still know, DO YOU KNOW THIS? Still know, without a shadow of a doubt, that we are loved, cherished and forgiven by God. Lent reminds us that even when we are in the "deep temptations of the wilderness," God is always with us.

The choice is ours at this point.

We can decide what we want, not only out of this Lenten season, but also in all the "seasons" and also out of our faith.

Let's use this as a time to take charge and make changes in our lives; to seek something different.

Scripture doesn't say "Satan ATTEMPTED to tempt him."

Jesus was INDEED tempted!

Some commentaries suggest that Jesus WAS ACTUALLY tempted by whatever Satan offered. But he was NOT moved to fall into the temptation.

Which should give us comfort, really.

Jesus the Christ, God in human flesh, knows what is to feel temptation.

We need to accept God's grace when we DO fall into temptation.

Don't dwell on it too long.

Take charge and make the changes.

But, Dear Ones, seek out the “angels” of or supportive people and the provision that God has put in OUR lives to tend to us.

Today, our dangers are not wild beasts (no matter what the headlines say), but instead are distractions that come in all shapes and sizes.

The choice IS ours.

Will we look for the things we need to change?

Will we intentionally set aside distractions and choose disciplines?

- Like the practice of praying; that guides us into a life in union with God all the time?
- Like the discipline of giving that will lead us into greater appreciation of all that we have and can give?
- Or choosing a fast, FROM DISTRACTIONS, and into something that will take us into a deeper relationship and longer walk with God and God’s grace.

Let’s take charge and face the temptations.

Let’s work at finding balance in our lives and schedules to do the hard work, in the example of Jesus himself. Because, we, like Jesus, ARE created to accomplish the work we ARE created for.

Thanks be to God!

Amen.