

Lent In Plain Sight  
BREAD – for the Journey  
Matthew 4:1-11  
First Sunday of Lent  
March 1, 2020  
Pastor Dea Sharp, Pikes Peak UMC

Matthew 4:1-11 (NKJV) Satan Tempts Jesus

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. <sup>3</sup> Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”

<sup>4</sup> But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ ”

<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup> and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written:

‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’

and,

‘In *their* hands they shall bear you up,  
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’ ”

<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not <sup>[a]</sup>tempt the LORD your God.’ ”

<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup> And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”

<sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to him, <sup>[b]</sup>“Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’ ”

<sup>11</sup> Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

During WWII, homes were destroyed, families separated and many children were taken to “safe camps” and they *were* safe, but because of the trauma they’d experienced, many of those kids had a hard time sleeping. Someone wise decided to give each child a piece of bread to hold at night. The bread in their hands reminded those kiddos that they’d eaten that day...and that they’d have something to eat the next day. The bread reminded them weren’t alone, that they could feel safe and go to sleep. (Story from [Sleeping with Bread](#) by Dennis Linn, Shelia F. Linn, and Matthew Linn, 1995)

Our Scripture reading today reminds US that Jesus spent some time alone.  
Forty days in the wilderness!

Jesus IS hungry.

And I guess, he wasn't *completely* alone, because Satan, as we heard David read, comes to Jesus THREE times to tempt him away from his divine ministry.

I began preparing for Lent, soon after the New Year, and found a book of devotionals that is inspiring the messages I'm preparing for this Season. It's called Lent in Plain Sight and we will have an ordinary object as our focus each Sunday.

Actually, we started last Wednesday, Ash Wednesday, with something as ordinary as ashes. During our service that night, we considered how we're blessed by the messy ashes and the annual ritual of having them on our foreheads.

See, God works through ordinary things and ordinary people.  
God takes the *mundane* and makes things holy.

I'm also reading another book (God really took a mundane pile of ordinary books and put them in order FOR ME)! This book, Liturgy of the Ordinary, Sacred Practices in Everyday Life, has chapters about the parts of our day like waking up, brushing our teeth, drinking tea, and sleeping. The author connects the ordinary patterns of our lives with liturgy – much like we follow (in the bulletin) each Sunday.

For instance, waking up – is about our baptism into the sunlight of a new day. How we've got A WHOLE 'NOTHER DAY in which to grow in our relationship with Christ...just like the liturgy of baptism.

And, brushing our teeth. That chapter is about the gestures of liturgical worship (especially in more orthodox churches), of standing (getting out of bed) and kneeling (putting our shoes on) and of bowing (to spit toothpaste)...all postures of expressing worship...just in brushing our teeth!

The point is that every moment of our day can be more than ordinary.  
And that objects are too.

So, in the temptations that Jesus endures, from Satan, are those darned rocks that hungry Jesus COULD turn into bread. But Jesus wasn't the one who was tricked by the Devil. Do you recall his response? "*Man does not live by bread alone.*"

Jesus isn't about to explain food groups to Satan.

His words remind us, even today, that there is MORE THAN BREAD!

Bread is a staple, isn't it?

Can't do a PB&J without it.

Today we have several kinds of bread on our altar for décor. One of the loaves, of course, is the one we will use for Holy Communion in a few minutes. In contrast, we have the formality of our brass candle sticks and the tray holding the little cups we'll sip from...and then we have the "ordinary" bread (which smells so good) that is less than formal, that reminds us of the human hands that made it, the earthly grain that is in it, and the love bread IS that feeds people.

There are A LOT of *kinds of bread*.

Depending on where we live or have visited we've tasted flat breads and pita breads, rye and sourdough. My Oma made an oatmeal cinnamon bread – "das ist gut"! Today's décor includes yummy breads we'll enjoy during fellowship, too....lemon poppyseed and pumpkin.

Many kinds!

And bread is mentioned MANY TIMES throughout the Bible.

There are verses about how it is to be prepared and when it is to be eaten.

Even Bible bread comes in different forms!

There was the "bread from heaven" that the Israelites received every morning.  
EVERY MORNING!

Bread can bring gratitude. Amen?

When we lived in Texas, folks would say that luck brought them "*bread from heaven*"....a coin they found, a well-placed parking spot, supplies needed for a church project...*bread from heaven*. BLESSING from heaven! That ain't luck my friends!

Ask someone who hasn't eaten for a couple days if *everyday, ordinary bread* isn't something worth rejoicing over!

Bread can remind us...

So, will you remember when you drop a slice in the toaster?

Or order a sub-sandwich...

...that BREAD (mundane and ordinary) can be something to praise God about?

There are OT and NT verses about bread, that are in stories that are tough to read and sometimes difficult to interpret.

There's an Ecclesiastes (11:1) verse about "*casting our bread on the water and sowing seeds.*"

Two or three more times, please?

That's a forehead scrunchin' verse!

Anybody got that one figured out?

What about the passage in Mark where the woman challenges Jesus and says, "*Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.*"

She's hungry. Her daughter is sick. They BOTH need Jesus.

Tough verses and passages in the Old and New Testaments.

So, sometimes, *what is every day life?*

Can't we all say that sometimes LIFE is tough to live...AND tough to interpret?

What is God trying to teach me here...if I pause, long enough to NOTICE?

Heck yeah it is!

But, walking down the bread aisle *doesn't have to be the same for us ever again* if we remember that God DOES take the ordinary things – for today BREAD – to remind us that we don't live our lives by ourselves.

We live our lives WITH God and WITH each other.

One of my favorite NT passages is the *feeding of the 5000*.

Some stinky kid with a rag that contains his lunch...

...can we get anymore ordinary or earthy?

...is discovered by one of Jesus' disciples. "*Hey, Jesus, this kid's got a couple fish and five little loaves of barley bread.*"

Five thousand mouths to feed.

Twelve nervous disciples.

A boy and cheap ingredients.

And Jesus.

OUR math doesn't add that up, does it?

But God....

Why is it so hard for us to trust God's ability to provide what we need – A LUNCH, A JOB, A GOOD SPOUSE – in the face of extraordinary odds?

*But we're not doing this alone!*

Jesus can do more with OUR stinkin' loaves of bread when we *willingly give them to him in faith!*

Jesus takes it and blesses it and uses it and **multiplies** it!

We just have to step up and offer what we've got – ordinary and mundane.

Jesus can take it from there.

Jesus assures us in John's gospel (Jn:6:35) "*I AM the bread of life.*"

Have you ever, REALLY considered that JESUS IS THE STAPLE OF OUR VERY EXISTENCE?

Jesus' words, his *identity* "the bread of life" reveal the promise and the truth that ***in the ordinary, necessary staples of life – HE IS PRESENT.***

Jesus assures us that it doesn't matter what's going on around us that thieves are trying to steal...

...empty calories can't fill...

...Even our being *oblivious* to the HOLY PROVISIONS that are all around us...

...that The Bread of Life, Jesus Christ nourishes us...won't run out. He won't run out from us and we won't run out 'cause there's enough) and Jesus blesses us.

When we come to this Table...

...when we hear the words, "This is my body that is FOR you...and to do this in remembrance of me" ...

...we also remember who WE are.

Table manners, like bread, are different from culture to culture but when we gather at the Table of the Lord, to have the meal THE LORD invites us to, our relationship with Christ also *indicates* what our relationships with one another should be.

We come to this table, ordinary people – with regrets and sins AND, PRAISE GOD, our gifts for service and our hopes for a better world. We come wanting to follow Jesus better, wanting to grow in love and how we serve, wanting to be *assured* of forgiveness and for our *ordinariness* to be healed.

When we eat the bread that is Christ's body, as the liturgy says, we get a taste of what the Heavenly banquet will be like. It says in Revelation at the end of the Bible, that the nations will gather and we'll ALL worship and praise God **together**.

When you come and take the bite of bread...

...when you taste it and feel the texture in your mouth...

Remember.

Remember the entire community of saints that have eaten and are eating this holy meal today, with us. All of us ordinary people are being infused, by *ordinary bread*, with God's Presence.

The Bread IS "Emmanuel" – God with us.

So, let's come with gratitude for what God has done for us in Jesus the Christ, the Bread of Life.

Come and BE ASSURED of the forgiveness that was made possible by Christ's holy ministry – that Satan tried, so poorly, to derail in the desert.

Come and trust, that with these ordinary elements we ARE receiving "bread from Heaven" and we can be strengthened to serve others.

It's with this meal that we receive spiritual bread for our journeys through Lent and journeys of faith and our journeys of life.

Just like those children from war, we can hold onto a piece of bread – but THIS is no ordinary bread, and know that we are NOT alone and we are given love and grace we can then share with our world.

Lent in Plain Sight.

An ordinary object....becomes this moment, this meal, this bread which IS God's gift to us.

AMEN!