

Before reading the gospel:

You may remember that our Presiding Bishop Curry has been leading a big campaign called the “Way of Love: Practices for a Jesus Centered life”: Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, and Rest. See the insert in your bulletin. In early December during Advent we focused on the first one: **Turn** and stayed with it through Advent. Now I’d like to move on and focus on the next step: **Learn**. The learning we are talking about here is learning Scripture, or the Bible.

“**Learn**: Reflect on Scripture each day, especially on Jesus’ life and teachings.”

“Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. “ – John 14:23 (to keep God’s word, it helps to know God’s word!)

Collect: “Grant us so to hear (the Holy Scriptures), read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them. BCP, p.236

“By reading and reflecting on Scripture, especially the life and teaching of Jesus, we draw near to God and God’s word dwells in us. When we open our minds and hearts to Scripture, we learn to see God’s story and God’s activity in every-day life.”

Today we are going to do a hybrid sermon, so you can LEARN a bit about Scripture and its relationship with sermons. Last week I briefly mentioned how I go about preparing a sermon. Today, we won’t go through all of those steps because frankly, I don’t think most of you want to be here the next six hours, which is about the average prep time. But we’ll do a brief version together. So let’s begin:

1. It begins with **reading**. Reading the lectionary. Today we’ll just focus on the Gospel reading. We will read it twice through. (first, I will read it and then Tom DuMontier, so we have another voice) And then we will be silent for one minute, **listening**, and allowing it to be absorbed, and **praying** that God’s spirit nudges us in some way. See if there is a word or phrase that is highlighted for you.

2. What word(s) seem to pop out at you? _____

3. Now we would look at where this reading falls in Luke’s story and read a bit of commentary so we can get some context. It may be important to know that Luke is writing in the 1st c. CE to an early Christian community that is trying to figure out what the Gospel means to them in this Roman dominated culture. The author is considering theological (what does this say about God?), political and social contexts. Luke’s decisions in what to include at times will be based on this situation rather than presenting historic events during the time of Jesus.

For this passage, I'll share with you some of what I know about this text. In seminary, I was taught that a section of Scripture that seems to be a cohesive passage is called a pericope. This pericope is often called the "Temptation of Jesus". So we're in Luke's 4th chapter. What has Luke told us so far in earlier chapters? (Birth of J, baptism...) He adds a genealogy list in there but basically this temptation story comes soon after Jesus' baptism. The baptism seems to be a high point in Jesus' life, where the Spirit assumed bodily form and rests on him. God proclaims to Jesus: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." This inaugurates his mission. And then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit is led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

And what happens in the wilderness? (Jesus is tempted. Faces trials...)

And where have we encountered trials in the wilderness before in Scripture? In the Exodus, with Moses and the Israelites. So both the genealogy that appears before this passage and this entering the wilderness stress the continuity of the heritage/salvation story and Jesus' part in it. Where have we heard 40 days before? (Moses and Elijah's fasting, 40 years of Israel's wandering.) Trials/formation. So there is a dialogue or an echo we can hear if we are familiar with these other stories

Temptations 1. Personal/social, 2. Political and 3. Religious; each temptation has strong appeal. Ends with foreboding, "until an opportune time", Luke anticipates the Passion, Tempter re-enters narrative thru Judas. Aim toward Jerusalem. All the temptations aim to thwart purposes of God. How will Jesus exercise his authority? The shape of his role as Messiah is at stake. He is Messiah, humble servant.

Reading Scripture helps us think theologically. Enter into scripture and see where it intersects with our life. Remembering the whole point is to look to God. God is the focus.

Where do you see your life or the life of this church intersecting with this passage? What grabs your attention? How might God be speaking to us? (freedom in obedience? To follow Jesus will mean being tempted to leave the God we love. Choosing yes to God and saying no to anything that thwarts the will of God? The Spirit is with us even as we face temptation?...)

This engagement of Scripture is something we can do in a group as we've done today, or in a smaller group as we do each week at Lectio Divina, and of course, you are all invited to do that! And it can also be done by yourself. I encourage you to get a study Bible and read it! Lent is a good time to commit to reading and reflecting and **learning** more Scripture! In fact, the Lenten Devotional written by Emmanuel folks is a good help. You could start there and read the scripture text that goes along with the commentary. Draw near to God and let's God's word dwell in you.

