

CRIBB<S> NOTE – February 21, 2010

What are you doing with your life? Are you satisfied? Are you comfortable? Have you decided to practice a Lenten discipline of sacrifice?

Lent is a season when followers of Jesus reflect on the significance of life and God's expectations for us. We think about those 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness and the temptations he faced after going without food or shelter. Totally exposed and vulnerable, Jesus discovered the true meaning of his ministry. He listened to the voices and realized his mind was not his friend. It was deceptive and deceiving. His mind told him what it thought he wanted to hear: eat bread, desire power, and go jump off a building to see if he could fly.

Lent is a special period in which we are encouraged to practice a discipline that prepares us for difficult moments. It is a time to clarify our priorities and explore the range of our commitments. That is what Jesus learned during his wilderness experience. In order for him to go forward with his purpose, he had to be highly disciplined. He spent time alone without companionship in an open space where his relationship with God was deepened.

Where do you go to be with God?

When we take time to be quiet and still, we become able to listen more intentionally. We can distinguish sounds and identify messages. Our ability to know the difference between danger and opportunity is sharpened. Consider what happened to Jesus.

As he ended his time in the desert, those voices began to emerge. Friendly, seductive, and, seemingly, reasonable, Jesus heard temptations to satisfy his hunger by using his new power to 'turn stones into bread'. After all, he was famished. What, without eating for more than a month? So, it seemed reasonable to test his gifts by making food from nothing. But, that smooth, sweet voice had another purpose. It intended to expose his weakness and make him a slave to his appetite. Jesus' time in the wilderness allowed him to recognize the reason for that temptation.

Then, a second voice spoke up. Since Jesus had overcome one basic need and endured solidarity, he was tempted to exploit the world through domination. There was nothing to stop him from leading a campaign to control nations. He had the power. The problem however was that his purpose was to demonstrate love, mercy, and peace. He lived to create community and not empires. His mission was not for his own glory and authority over other people, rather to point humankind toward God.

The third and final effort to break the spirit and will of Jesus was through a persuasive act to fly off a high building and show the world an incredible display of super human power. Like a Superman cartoon, Jesus was confronted with an overwhelming urge. Again, he did not yield. Instead, he responded to that voice resolute and determined not to test God. His examination was complete. He was ready to face the world.

We may not feel called to such a task. Yet, everyday there are situations that require wisdom and discipline. There are temptations that come into our life and we need power over them.

Lent is the season when we acknowledge God's presence and appreciate God's grace. We pay attention to what is taking place around us and we respond appropriately.

Lent is welcomed. We enter this season with the assured God's mercy endures forever. We may feel doubtful about our abilities to overcome temptations, but through prayer, meditation and sacrifice, we discover God gives us strength to beat the odds, and we give praise to the Creator who loves us more than we can imagine. That is what Lent is ultimately all about.

-Pastor Art Cribbs