

**Genesis 1:20-21**

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

**Luke 4:1-13**

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying 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 protect you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

## Sermon

My mother-in-law's birthday was a few weeks ago and my wife had a wonderful idea for a gift. She decided to take the kids and pick up a couple of bird feeders to put out on the tree near our kitchen window. For the last two weeks we have looked out at the various small finches and other small birds coming to the finch feeder, and a variety of larger birds, even a cardinal that came to the larger feeder. We were trying to determine which birds we had seen; house finches and goldfinches, robins and cardinals, and at least one tufted titmouse - the funny little bird with a mohawk. It is funny how seeing the birds out the window can really put a smile on your face, enjoy the morning or afternoon a bit more.

I just imagine God looking down from heaven, like I sometimes do from my kitchen window - only God's view is much more expansive than mine. I imagine God looking down and seeing the great variety of birds, small and large, common or rare, and God can't help but enjoy God's day just a bit more as well. "So God created... every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good." There is something about watching the beautiful diversity of the birds, something about us that wants to seek and find new birds, birds we haven't seen before, we want to find out about what type of bird they are, where they come from, what their habits are, what makes them unique. We are amazed at all the different types of birds, and each of them remind us of God's great creative genius that birthed each of them into the world.

The season of Lent is a season of reflection and penitence, a season of fasting and prayer. And the season begins by remembering Jesus' fasting and reflection in the wilderness. Fresh from the waters of the Jordan, still dripping with the Holy Spirit, Jesus is called into the wilderness and there he fasts and prayed for 40 days. And there, in the midst of the 40 days, Jesus was tempted by the devil. "Transform the stone into bread - aren't you hungry? Worship me and I will give you glory and authority over kingdoms of earth. Jump from the top of the temple so that the angels may bare you up and show that you are truly the Son of God."

The devil sought to ensnare Jesus in cages of human frailty and limitations. Jesus was fully human, and he hungered just like we do. Have you ever been hungry, ever notice the tendency to easily become angry in that moment? There is a word for that - we say you are hangry. But this is more than just a hunger issue. We all find that we act more erratic when we feel like our basic needs are threatened. Whether it is money or work or house, things we feel like we need to be fully alive. As a nation, we have gone to war over threats to resources, both natural and created. And as a society we like to segregate ourselves into groups of haves and have-nots. We all are hoping to be rich with things, no one wants to self-identify as poor, and many of us would like to gate ourselves off from those whom we perceive as poor, gate our communities, our states, and our country. "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

From an early age I was told that I would go to college, that I could be anything I wanted to be. In school I learned that capitalism was about making as much money as possible

and to do that you had to find yourself in positions of power and authority. So in a world that says, you can do anything and what you should do is earn as much money and buy as many possessions as possible, it seems easy to shift our allegiance or worship to anyone who can take us further and earn us more. But Jesus recalls the scripture, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."

Finally Jesus is taken to the Temple itself - the center of the faith, the seat of religion for all Jews. And there, at the top of highest tower, what does the devil say, "Through yourself down, for it is written..." What has Jesus said in response to every test of the devil thus far? "It is written..." Jesus has quoted scripture in response to all that the devil has tempted him with, but know the devil tempts him with religion itself. The devil quotes scripture, not once but twice.

And so many people in the world work to ensnare us in the same way, pulling out one verse or one line of scripture and holding it up as the only verse that matters, and as definitive on whether you are in or not. Say these few words, and you are in, believe like we do and you are in - but woe to you who might doubt or believe differently. The devil knows scripture and looks to entrap us there as well.

But what does Jesus say in response?... "It is written, 'Do not test the Lord, your God.'" Jesus, when confronted with challenging scripture doesn't through out the book, but instead shares a deeper word, one that understands that the diversity of Genesis through Revelation is not to be used to entrap but to free us. Jesus stands on the foundation of all scripture and Jesus' ministry is one then that welcomes people of great diversity to come and see, to stand upon the word and find new life in the waters that are there. Let us enter into this lenten journey, looking for all the different birds, and open ourselves to God's word that invites us all to come and see, to come to the water. Thanks be to God. Amen