

Sermon notes March 10, 2019

Focus Lent is not about you!

All readings https://www.lectionarypage.net/YearC/RCL/Lent/CLent1_RCL.html#ps1

Lent - For some of you, Lent is a moving time of the year. It's a time set aside for reflection and examination. A time to "give up" something and use that extra space to serve others. Yet more important than any particular practice or feeling we have about Lent, it is a training ground for loving for God and others

Temptation story The temptation of Jesus is a promise. Jesus is the bearer of a promise made at baptism (this is my beloved) and he is not going to let anyone convince him otherwise even in the stress of the desert and hunger. Jesus goes in knowing he's loved and he leaves the desert knowing he is loved. That is a superpower we all have. So give up something, take something on but doing it knowing that you are loved and everyone you meet is loved.

This is not about you! There are some very explicit cosmic elements to the temptation story that has nothing to do with us. It's all about Jesus' sovereignty over the creation and his sovereignty over political systems. It's very *unhelpful* for us to think that we are being like Jesus when we get up scotch and feel good about our sacrifice.

The story is primarily a clash of worlds. The devil (or however you imagine evil in the world) is looking for an inroad to convince Jesus that he needs a little help from the dark side. If Jesus would just dance for the devil, the devil will help Jesus out.

To beat this point, where we place ourselves in the story is super important. The real temptation for us is to act like we are not loved completely by God, and not giving up things we normally really like. How much we like chocolate and the admirable leap to 40 days of abstinence really missed the Gospel message.

You see the power of Luke's story is not the devil is trying to get Jesus to do something but he really wants to do like take down three finger of whiskey. No the devil is trying to offer a completely different reality for Jesus to buy into which would corrupt Jesus' vision of God..

Negotiations There is a wonderful movie you can rent called *Bridge of Spies* based on real events. It's a few years old now. It's got Tom Hanks as a lead character who gets swept up into international cold war politics. A Russian spy - Rudolph Abel is caught and brought to trial in the US. Tom Hanks becomes lead counsel for this man who is universally hated by the US citizens.

James Donovan / Tom Hanks has a vision for justice that is not dependent upon the emotions of individuals. He acts based on a vision of how the United States justice system is supposed to be. He keeps fighting for this vision against judges, CIA, his employer and even his wife and kids. Throughout the movie people think he's just delusional, trying to shoehorn some impractical ideals into the "real world."

The irony is that years later he would gain the confidence of Cuban Premier Fidel Castro and on December 21, 1962 helped secure the release 1,113 prisoners of the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion... By the end of the negotiations, July 3, 1963, Donovan had secured the release of 9,703 men, women and children from Cuban detention.

James Donovan in his own way offers us lens through which to see the temptation of Jesus - Fight for a vision of the kingdom of God word love reigns and worry less about the caffeine withdrawal headache that you offer Jesus as a gift of how pious you are.

Something not directly related to Lent but -- a year ago, Ash Wednesday

I know this is off topic but, I can't believe the Parkland shooting was on Ash Wednesday last year and we had to grieve in the aftermath on the first Sunday of Lent 2018.

I want to offer to you what I offered your last year a reflection from a friend of mine — a high school principal in Fort Worth (near Dallas, TX). It seems as relevant a year later as it did then. My friend put the pain and frustration well. Days after the shooting last year he wrote –

“Are we going to do anything?” This was the first question I was asked as I walked the halls this morning at my school. And my answer? “No, we are not.” And now I am trying to sit at my desk and do some work and not cry. We do active shooter drills at my school. Practice having kids huddle in fear for their lives.

“Are we going to do anything?” What can we do? Thoughts and prayers? Politicize the event to discuss gun laws? Hold a school assembly and get the counselors involved? No, we are not. the kids don't care. They are numb.

“Are we going to do anything?” Yeah. I'm going to keep coming to school and try to be THAT person for my kiddos, come home and be dad for my own kids, and keep moving forward. school shootings? I have my vote, and I'll use it. So after getting teared up three times at school today (not in front of kids luckily) I'm spent. Just fatigued to the bone. And tomorrow I will get into saddle up and do it again. We still have kids to teach and take care of. That never seems to change.

So in this Holy season remember those who suffer; give thanks for Jesus the skilled negotiator; and remember that you are not like Jesus when you feel tempted for another taste of whatever you like.

Todd