

WELCOME 18 February 2018 1 Lent '18 B

Mark 1:9-15 & 1 John 2:16

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! It is great to have you here this morning. Please stay for morning tea after worship so we can get a chance to know one another better...

We call it the domino effect. One event sets off a chain of similar events where no domino is left standing at the end of the line. It's the simple reality of cause & effect leading to some result.

The Bible tells us that when it comes to our hearts - hearts that were created for the love of God & to love God with everything that is in us in response - there has been a domino effect that has caused permanent damage to our hearts. It's called sin & the results of sin are always the same - a broken heart either burdened by guilt & filled with pain, or so hardened by sin that it refuses to acknowledge the brokenness that exists or the pain that follows.

But God has promised: *I will give them an undivided heart & put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Ez 11:19*

Through Jesus Christ & the power of his Holy Spirit within you, God keeps that promise & then defends you from the very things that would start the dominos falling again...God wants to protect you so that you are freed from being Heartbroken by Temptation and in that freedom, Scriptures declare: *I will run in the way of Your commandments, when You set my heart free. (Ps 119:32)*

LWKids is BACK! Leonie will lead our youngest disciples out to the verandah during the next song medley.

If you'd like to be part of that team leading our kids...see me today!

1 Lent '18 B – CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART: HEARTBROKEN BY TEMPTATION

- FAITH CHAT:** 1. In this past week, was there a time when you felt inadequate, vulnerable or “weak”?
2. Have you decided this year to give something up for Lent? Why? Why not?

I have some friends in the US, who in their PC years (pre-children) had a gorgeous boxer named Fred. They got him from a shelter & he was quite a dog. Cute as boxers are...I'll stick with my greyhound. But Fred was amazing. Leonie & I were having dinner at their house & they put Fred's food in his bowl & my friend Tim said, “Fred. Down.” Fred laid flat with his belly to the ground & his paws out in front of him. They put his food bowl on the floor & picked one piece of dog food out & said “Say your prayers” & set it on the back of Fred's paws. Fred stared at the bit of food on his paws (I think he stopped breathing) just stared at the bite & the bowl beyond. After a painfully long wait, my friend said, “Amen.” Faster than a blink Fred gobbled the bit off his paws & was nose down in his bowl. I was stunned. So I asked if he could do it again. Sure enough, after Fred cleaned his bowl, they did it again. “Fred. Down.” Down he went. A doggie treat was produced & gently laid on his paws along with, “Say your prayers.” Time stood still...until Amen & the treat vanished.

Straight up that dog's tougher than I am. Cold beer hot day...I'm on it before Amen. I'm not the only one... Eunice's cupcakes & our small group ...we don't even get to “let's pray.” Add 40 days of fasting to that & most of us here would've gone for any sort of offer the tempter made...And I find it interesting that Mark seems to report this event from Jesus' life with that same understanding...As you were hearing the narrative, how many of you were waiting for the 3 specific temptations we get in Mt & Lk? Stones to bread, jump off the temple roof into God's hands, power of the world's kingdoms. Do you feel cheated because Mark seems to be writing this gospel so quickly that he left that bit out?

There's a reason...the specific temptations don't matter...they don't? Nope. Why? Because all temptations...every one...are the same. Really? Absolutely...from cheating on your taxes to cheating on your spouse, to running your debt into next century payments, to drinking yourself to death, to surrendering to your anxieties or your parents' anxieties, or living down to the lowest level of the culture around you ALL. Temptations. Are. The. Same. Mark shows us how...

BIBLES...Mark chapter 1:9ff

Vss 9-11 – Jesus is baptized by John in the Jordan River...his complete identification with sinful humanity is underway. He is baptized to physically link the act of baptism to the forgiveness in baptism that his death/rez will give to us. As he emerges from the water God shouts “*You are my Son, my dearly loved Son; you bring me great joy.*” Then in 2 verses Mk records that the Spirit that has descended upon Jesus “drives” him into the wilderness where he is tempted by satan, surrounded by wild animals & attended by angels. From there he enters Galilee with his core sermon: “*The time promised by God has come at last! The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins & believe the Good News!*” The gospels record the temptation sandwiched ^{b/t} Jesus' baptism & the start of his ministry...It looks like this: Identity – Temptation – Destiny

Mark compresses the account (leaving out the 3 specific temptations) because all temptations are the same...all temptations are an attempt to drive a wedge between you/me living out our God-given identity as dearly loved sons & daughters of the Father in whom he finds great delight & our destiny as inheritors & agents of his rule/kingdom of grace-love-mercy-peace-joy-wholeness-eternal fullness of life. Mark doesn't care (I don't care) about the specifics of the temptations...food, power, glory ...could have offered him Nat'l Party leadership I hear it's up for grabs...But what does matter is that every offer/temptation attempts to undercut that joy/love-filled relationship with the Father & erode his assurance of his identity & his destiny as the first-fruits of the Reign – Rule – Kingdom of God...ALL. Temptations. Are. The. Same.

We tend to externalize temptation & make it about our behaviour. We tend to think of temptation (esp during lent) as some sort of test of strength or faith...(no-smoking ads “Your willpower is a muscle. It gets stronger every time you exercise it) While there is some truth there, it turns the good news of the kingdom (where there are no scores kept & no prizes for super-good behaviour) into the bad news of keeping track of our successes & failures against various temptations. Who needs that? Who needs Santa's naughty/nice list?

Jesus' life & ministry begins under God's declaration “*You are my Son, my dearly loved Son; you bring me great joy.*” His identity & his relationship with the Father were given before he went to the Jordan, before he faced the tempter, before he offered his first sermon/healing/exorcism/miracle Whether Jesus said yes/no didn't determine his sonship, his belovedness, or that God delighted in him. They were the reality. That was his identity. Jesus could neither earn them nor lose them...Neither can we. This relationship that God has with Jesus is the same relationship that God initiates with each one of us through our baptism into that Son's death/rez. In Jesus Christ crucified/risen/ruling each of us is a son or daughter whom God loves whom God dearly loves & in whom God delights. Yes...you.

I know that's hard to believe...we've all given in to some temptation or other. Harboured a grudge, sought revenge, took the easy way out, cut corners, shaded the truth, did less than required just to get by, gave ourselves to some want insisting it was a need or a right. We looked God right in the eye & said, “It's my life I'll do with it what I want.” We declared our autonomy...stood our ground on an identity of self – self-esteem self-importance self-determination self-centeredness

Yes I know...surrendered to our fear & worries...found some excuse something/one to blame...And we've convinced ourselves either that God just doesn't understand our struggle or he's not going to get his hands dirty for us. But to each of us God shouts, "You are my child, my dearly loved child, you bring me great joy." No temptation can change his mind...no success...no failure. That's your reality. That's your identity.

Notice too how Mark discusses the temptation itself...Vs 12...the Spirit that has descended upon Jesus now sent/drives/cast/compels him into the desert/wilderness There he is tempted by satan & surrounded by wild beasts. In this past week, was there a time when you felt inadequate, vulnerable or "weak"? Well...Jesus gets that. He's been there done that. In that moment of inadequacy, vulnerability, or weakness what's the greatest temptation? To think God's cut you loose. That God's walked off & left you high & dry. That God has abandoned you when you need him most.

But hang on...what does the Scripture actually say? *The Spirit then compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness, where he was tempted by Satan for forty days. He was out among the wild animals, & angels took care of him.* The Spirit walked Jesus into the wilderness & the angels are there...Don't ever think for a second that in the fire of some moment when you are faced with a choice to live out some other identity – something other than child of God – dearly loved child of God – in whom God takes great delight that the Father has left the building. The Father's love & delight in you does not stop at the desert's edge. He doesn't chuck you out into the deepest wasteland & say "Let's see if you can make it." The OT reminds us that when God's people wandered in the wilderness for 40 years God wandered with them. When God's people suffered the exile for their rebellion God went to Babylon with them. The Father who has named & claimed you in his love stands with you in the trials/tests/temptations of this life. He did with Jesus & that means that's your reality too.

The temptation confirmed in Jesus his baptismal identity. He lived from the Father's voice of acclamation. He faced down the tempter from the strength of the love & delight of the Father. He refused to shift his allegiance, trust, & confidence away from God to some immediately available substitute that promises more now. Remember...All temptations are the same...they all seek to corrode our confidence that what God has given is enough – that what God has promised will be sufficient – that God is trustworthy & sufficient & more importantly that God is who he says he is & we are who he says we are...loved, dearly loved, children in whom the Father delights.

And having stood his ground in that identity through the wilderness of temptation, Jesus steps forward into his destiny: *Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News. "The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins & believe the Good News!"*

Earlier I noted that the gospels record the temptation sandwiched ^{b/t} Jesus' baptism & the start of his ministry...so that it's: Identity – Temptation – Destiny. This is why Jesus came...to declare the coming of God's rule of grace – to proclaim the advent of God's reign of love – to announce the end of sin/death/evil through his life given for ours & his resurrection which he then gives to us.

You can miss everything else but know this: God loves you more than anything. Loves you – each of us – enough to send His only Son into the world to take on our lot & life, to suffer the same temptations/wants, to be rejected as we feel rejected & to die as we will die, all so that we may know God is with us & for us forever. But even more, God raised Jesus from the dead to demonstrate that God's love is more powerful than all the hate/fear in the world & that the life God offers is more powerful than sin/evil/death.

And here's the real power...when you & I live from that identity from that good news firmly planted in that promise of God to forever be with us & for us...then in every temptation satan must flee because Jesus has defeated sin/power of evil & they no longer have a claim on our hearts...satan must flee because in his death Jesus took sin/evil to death & by his rising gave us in return forgiveness, life & salvation & his relationship with the Father & now stands ruling over all things with hell crushed under his feet. We now live under the promises of the risen Jesus to thwart the plans & schemes of the tempter. Those promises...

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure. 1 Cor 10:13

But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory... because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world 1 Jn 4:4

This High Priest of ours (Jesus) understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, & we will find grace to help us when we need it most. Heb 4:14-16

So let's approach that throne of grace...first to pray but then to feast & rejoice that as those baptized into the life & mission of Jesus we share his identity as children of God who bring God great joy & who bear his image, live his presence & carry out his work in this world...as inheritors & agents of rule/kingdom of grace-love-mercy-peace-joy-wholeness-eternal fullness of life. **Father shout over us today your love & delight. Assure us again that we are yours & no**

power can snatch us from your hand. Live through us with such boldness that every trick of the tempter fails & many around us are drawn into your arms of eternal love. Through Jesus Christ...Amen.