

Jan Hus Presbyterian Church & Neighborhood House

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There will always be those who test us...

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### Sermon Notes - Draft

“There is no contradiction,” says the Interpreter’s Bible, “between led up of the spirit and tempted by the devil. God’s ordaining had been laid on Jesus, and he must think through his mission. How could it best be fulfilled? The exultation was inevitably followed by a reaction. The vision ‘faded into the light of common day.’ The Spirit led him into this searching of his heart, yes, and in the accompanying testing.”

What would he find? What would Jesus discover in the days ahead? His awareness of his oneness with God that had made certain sign possible: was it his imagination only. The signs – coincidences comprised of desire and emotion?

Jesus had read the Psalm, Psalm 32 of David. He knew that God had given him a ‘clean slate,’ a fresh start. He knew God held nothing against him – and he struggled to hold nothing back from God. He knew what most in this room have learned: that holding things in is harmful and hurtful.

Jesus prayed, all the time we’re told, he knew the ‘island hideaway’ of God; he knew that God-affirmers found themselves loved.

And he knew more. Still, there were temptations. He was Jesus and there were temptations. And he struggled... that means... he struggled and was like us. The reading of Matthew this morning highlights this. Jesus highlighted this for his disciples. Each temptation is one we know...all of which we struggle with today: If though you be the Son of God –

- a) In your hunger command that these stones be turned to bread

- b) Throw yourself off a cliff and be unharmed
- c) Worship me, the world, and the world is yours

For many, the ability to achieve or possess such things would seem to be irresistible. Abundance of supply, invincibility and invulnerability, and the power, might, and glory of world control.

What is unspoken is that it is likely that Jesus was pretty driven by his call to bring faithfulness to the world, justice to the oppressed, and a solution to the pain and suffering he saw all around him. There had to be a point, somewhere, when he said, “No...it’s not going to work this way. It’s not about elevating society to a fully fed, fully healthy community under one powerful leader.

This is all fleeting. Surely he was moved and charged those around him to follow the great teachings of the Hebrew Bible, teachings about hospitality and caring for one another, but he was about to conquer what no one had yet to do – the stigma and hopelessness of death. He was carrying the Good News that this life was never meant to be an end in itself.

And we are not tested by famine, earthquake, illness, or other conditions in the ways some suggest. These are not conditions imposed upon us by God to see how we respond or react to them. These are simply human conditions. Conditions that everyone, even Jesus faced. These are not conditions whose absence guarantees eternal life. Eternal life is not here.

It is likely that what Matthew describes was part of a teaching of Jesus: at some point an explanation of how the struggle in resisting the distraction of temptations away from the God-work that exists here and now is always a challenge but not to give up, no matter what.

Matthew and Luke both carry the story of the temptation, but the oldest of the gospels, Mark, does not. Each of the synoptic writers are trying to carry the message, the teachings – some in more dramatic fashion than others.

We, too, do this all the time. [Desert story]

Whatever their approaches to writing and describing the ministry of Jesus and his time on earth, it is clear that there will always be those and things who test us. Always. We will struggle and sometimes mightily. However, we are never lost.

In the end, Matthew tells us that when the test was over – The Devil left. And in his place, angels! Angels came and took care of Jesus' needs.

We will always be tested by others and our own wants and desires – and God and the Angels will always be there for us – however that all works – just as they were for Jesus.