

Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church (USA)



Changing Lives and
Growing In God's Love

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February 23, 2010

Stones to Bread

Dear Readers,

Ah, temptation. In the Gospel of Luke (4:1-13) we read about how Jesus was driven into the wilderness where he was tempted by the devil. It is a story that is common to the gospels and can also be found almost word for word in the Gospel of Matthew. While Matthew and Luke differ on the order of the temptations, both of them record three distinct temptations and both begin with the temptation of turning stones to bread.

As the story goes, Jesus has been in the wilderness for 40 days and in those 40 days he has had no food. No doubt, he was hungry. We get hungry if we have lunch late—this hunger of Jesus was real hunger. It was deep hunger; he was famished. Israel faced that same hunger in the wilderness. It was there that God fed them with manna from the heavens.

When Jesus is tempted the Tempter invites him to turn the very stones into bread. No doubt there were plenty of stones in that wilderness place. Were Jesus to have given into the temptation and turned stones to bread there would have been enough bread to not only solve his own hunger but to solve the hunger of those ones who had no food in his day.



There is a very real way one can read the temptation not as a choice between good and bad, but more as a being confronted with a seemingly good alternative and then having to struggle with what to do. Wouldn't it be a good thing to feed hungry people with an abundance of bread? Who could argue with that?



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The real issue had to do with Jesus having to be clear about his purpose and how he would be called to live that purpose. Sure he would provide bread for hungry ones, but at that point it was not to be by transforming stones into bread. Rather, the way forward was to be through the transformation of his living body into the bread feast of the Eucharist. "This is my body broken for you....Take, and eat."

I think temptation for most of us is more like the stones to bread temptation Jesus faced. It often is not about choosing between one thing that is clearly bad and another that is clearly good. Often the temptation is between two (or even more) options that both seem to have benefits. So, what do we do when confronted with temptation?

What do we do? We do what Jesus did. We spend enough time in prayer out there in the wilderness in order to discern how God is leading us. Somehow (we know how—it is the Holy Spirit!), yes somehow the prayer, spiritual practices, and conversations with those in the Christian community all serve to help grant us some clarity about God's leading for us.

I pray that this Lenten season is one that binds you to Christ as the Living Bread for your hunger in life.

Blessings,
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