

Matins Mar. 1 2020

Texts. Gen. 2. 15-17, 3: -7, Ps. 32, Rom. 5. 12-19, Math. 4:1-11. March 1, 2020

Supporting hymn: Blue #289 Filled with the Spirit's Power.

Meditation thought: The heavens were opened, and He saw God's Spirit descending, alighting on him ... saying, "This is my Son, the Beloved, in Whom I have delighted." Matt. 3.16.

We gather on this first Sunday of Lent, so that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shift from our daily routine of life into that of God's favour and life. This is not an easy move. We are human, all sons and daughters of Adam. The "all have sinned" statement of Romans 5.12 might be corrected. Sin is among us in two forms. One, as a disease, and secondly, as contagion, our sphere of living is contaminated, worse than the corona virus. A half minute of world news only confirms this sin state. Sin is an inward disposition of rebellion against God arising out of the exaltation of self.

We need release from sin. Romans tells us that the first Adam brought DEATH and condemnation. In contrast, the second Adam is really NO comparison. It is not a 1 and 1 situation. Jesus is life, is grace, is righteousness, is forgiveness. Christ dismisses condemnation and death, and gives joy, as indicated in our Ps. 32 reading. Thus, in joy we worship the Lord Jesus in word, prayer and song. This day's event of Jesus and Satan comes to us after Jesus hears the voice of God saying, "This is my Son, the Beloved, in Whom I have delighted." How meaningful this was for Jesus, this voice from His Father. This at the beginning of his service on earth, among us. The account is written in each of the first three books of the NT. Mark reverses the 2nd and 3rd temptations. This delight, voiced by God the Father to the Son now on earth was precisely what Satan was testing. And it came after Christ fasted for 40 days. Jesus was hungry, really hungry. This hunger affirms the HUMANITY of our Lord, as does his Bethlehem birth in Mary.

Let's break a bit and look at this number 40. It is significant to a people who knew their Jewish history. The flood lasted 40 days. Israel was in the wilderness for 40 years. Moses was on Mt. Sinai 40 days. (Ex. 24.18). Before entering the promised land, the men scouted the land for 40 days (Num. 13.5). The prophet Elijah was in the wilderness 40 days (1Kg. 19.5-8). God takes care in God's actions.

We move on. In hunger, Jesus is tempted by Satan, the Devil, the Slanderer, the Accuser, the Tempter, the Evil One, use what word you wish, but be aware of this reality. From the Brazilian jungle I have no doubt of this force, this power-bringing FEAR into the minds of thousands, in that the past death of a fellow tribes person came through such a force, and must be revenged with another death. The superstition of my illness is due to my lack of heeding this evil spirit's prescriptions. There is NO FREEDOM. And shaman X has more power than Shaman Y. There is an evil power around us beyond the sin within us. This force is pervasive, omnipresent and forceful in our social system. This is Satan.

From this spectacular event, God, yes God, led Jesus into the wilderness to be tried by the Slanderer. How Matthew got this story, so as to write it on a scroll, we do not know. He did not see the actual event, nor did any of the other Gospel writers. The U of Waterloo scientists had not yet discovered Drones. This was followed by the three temptations from the Devil herself. Jesus is **tempted**. We are tempted. The prayer Jesus gave us, reads, "Lead us not into temptation." Temptations come to us in multiple forms: our trust in our many accumulated assets, our education, homes, means of transportation, status, technology, employment, family, even friendship. My prayer is that I **never** have these as idols, taking in any way the place of God. May my eyes not be **blurred** or **blinded** so as not to see these idols in these post-modern times.

At the end of the Slander-Jesus encounter, angels minister to Jesus. Many of our fellow church members in the south know of the comfort and help received from angels. Angels are available in North America as well. Satan knew Scripture. Jesus knew Scripture.

I believe the **Number One and prime lesson in this first Sunday of Lenten time, this meeting of the Slander and Jesus is the following. The Slanderer's goal was to smash this Father-Son relationship.** The heavens had just declared that this was the **Beloved Son, in whom the Father was delighted.** Satan wished to **permanently terminate this relationship.** The Slanderer wanted the **very soul of the Son of God.** The Divine Father-Son relation was tested. The Devil urged Jesus to do the spectacular. But Jesus does not serve humankind to do the spectacular.

Second, the Slanderer shows Jesus the kingdoms of not just Israel, but of the **world**. You have divine power- Show us this power! Do the wonder. Mesmerize the people. But in Jesus' life He opted for powerlessness. Third, from the high place, "Make it all political. Take and use your power." In other words, use your power, and dismiss the suffering. The walk with God is through suffering. Jesus does not tolerate any idolatry. There is ONE GOD (Deut. 6.13).

In the end, Jesus told the Slanderer to leave. Jesus wants nothing of a compromised position. In a later encounter with Peter, forcefully Jesus said, "Get behind me, Satan." Then what? Let's take note. Angels comforted Him. He then walked into ministry. He called two sets of brothers to follow him. Then He proclaims the good news, and did many miracles: diseases, and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics, and cured them. Jesus was in mission. The Beloved Son of God in whom GOD is delighted.