



March 6, 2022

Sermon Series

Lent: Full to the Brim

This Week's Big Idea

Even in the Desert

Introduction:

The scriptures for this Lenten season are filled with parables and promises of God's abundant and expansive grace. Jesus as a mother hen, a prodigal son welcomed home, a fig tree nurtured with care and hope, precious oil poured out lovingly and freely, stones shouting out with praise —these sacred texts are brimming with a Gospel of grace. We've done nothing to deserve or earn this grace, and yet, like water, it spills over. *Full to the Brim* is an invitation—into a radically different Lent, into a full life. It's an invitation to be authentically who you are, to counter scarcity and injustice at every turn, to pour out even more grace wherever it is needed. When we allow ourselves to be filled to the brim with God's lavish love, that love spills over. It reaches beyond ourselves; like water, it rushes and flows, touching everything in its path.

Luke 4:1-13 NRSV

¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. ³ The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." ⁴ Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" ⁵ Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. ⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." ⁸ Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" ⁹ Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰ for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' ¹¹ and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" ¹² Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ¹³ When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Bible Conversation

The devil twice tempts Jesus with a challenge to Jesus' identity as the "Son of God". Can you think of any other places where the devil tempts people to doubt their identity as God's children?

The Spirit leads Jesus into the "wilderness". Why would God intentionally lead Jesus into a place of temptation and trial?

Reflection by Pastor Tim Rotman

The story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness comes immediately after his baptism in the Jordan River where God proclaimed Jesus to be God's beloved son. The word used for "wilderness" here is a synonym for desert and can be translated as "desolate" or "forsaken". The wilderness Jesus wanders for forty days would have been part of the same desert that the Israelites wandered for forty years. It is a hot, dry, desolate land.

Despite God recently proclaiming Jesus as his beloved Son, the devil twice begins his temptations with the challenge "*If you are the Son of God.*" It seems the devil is saying "If God REALLY loved you, if you were REALLY God's son... then you wouldn't be out here suffering in this desert. If you really were the Son of God, you wouldn't have to be hungry or thirsty, weak or worried." Jesus answers the first temptation with "*One does not live by bread alone,*" and answers every temptation with a clear assertion of his willingness to trust God more than he trusts the circumstances he finds himself in. In the scarcity of the desert, the devil tempts Jesus with the opportunity to change his circumstances. Jesus responds with a reminder to us all that our circumstances do not define us, and that there is an abundance with God that helps us to *have* enough and *be* enough. I am reminded of Jesus' words to the woman at the well in John 4, "*Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*"

Each week we have a lovely reminder of the abundance of life that flows to each of us through Christ in the beautiful stained glass of the Zumbro sanctuary cross. Deep blue in the middle, the water flows out to the desert at the edges reminding us that true abundance does not flow from the outside in, but from the inside out!

Closing Prayer

Behold, Lord, an empty vessel that needs to be filled. My Lord, fill it. I am weak in the faith; strengthen me. I am cold in love; warm me and make me fervent, that my love may go out to my neighbor. I do not have a strong and firm faith; at times I doubt and am unable to trust you altogether. O Lord, help me. Strengthen my faith and trust in you. In you I have sealed the treasure of all I have. I am poor; you are rich and came to be merciful to the poor. I am a sinner; you are upright. With me, there is an abundance of sin; in you is the fullness of righteousness. Therefore, I will remain with you, of whom I can receive, but to whom I may not give. Amen. (ELW, p. 87)

Next Week's Bible Theme and Text:

Sermon Series: Full to the Brim

Text: Luke 13:31-35

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Reflection Conversation

Can you recall a time when the difficulty of your circumstances caused you to question whether you were truly God's beloved child?

Looking back on difficult times, can you name any "abundance" that God provided in the midst of scarcity?

The 1 Question:

How might a mindset that trusts in the abundance of God rather than the scarcity of our circumstances make a difference in the challenges our world faces around war, poverty, injustice, and inequality?

1 week.
1 story.
1 message.