

Luke 4:1-13

Jesus' Power over Temptation for Us

Nunawading and Waverley, 6-3-22

Dear friends in Christ,

The temptations Jesus endured and conquered show us the three levels of meaning human beings seek. Bread is appetite, the desire to feel alive but materialism won't do it. Feeding an appetite doesn't work. Jesus said, **that human beings do not live by bread alone**. That is so true. We would soon tire of living in five-star luxury and eating at Michelin rated restaurants. It is the old conundrum that once one step in the career is achieved or the house is renovated, or you have had an overseas trip, it all becomes a little ho-hum. You need more but the more you have the less satisfied you become. Jesus said that we need something beyond human appetite.

**Jumping off the pinnacle** and miraculously surviving was the temptation of seeking the applause of the crowd. It is the old story of seeking the approval of others. What people think of you is a dangerous guide for life. People do not know you and what they say you should do can often be wrong. Two Australians, Robin Warren, a pathologist and Barry Marshall, a professor, went against the crowd who said that gastric ulcers were a result of life-style. They differed, saying that a bacterium was responsible. Marshall went so far as injecting himself with this bacterium causing acute inflammation in his lower gut and then curing it. They achieved something because they didn't look for the approval of others.

The third temptation is ambition, the attempt to be somebody by achievement. In an instant, **Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and said he could have them**. We have seen this recently in the lives of autocrats wanting empires. The trouble, here, is that someone will replace you, someone more ruthless and more ambitious.

Jesus won the victory over appetite. He lived by **every word his Father spoke**, finding hope in it, trusting in his Father, gaining courage and strength. He dwelt so deeply in the word of God that his whole life was guided by it with the result that he did his Father's will in a perfect way. He was nourished by the word, growing in wisdom

and understanding the purpose of his existence. Today he comes to us and asks, "Do you want to be controlled by your appetites or do you want meaning for your existence? The, believe in my word."

Jesus won the victory over the approval of others. He taught the crowds that followed him but he also was wary of them, knowing that they had a difference agenda, often wanting material goods or to use him against the Romans. Jesus did not seek the adulation of the crowd nor use God for his own ends. When it came to displaying miraculous power, it was for the benefit of others, their healing, their forgiveness and instruction.

Jesus won the victory over ambition by finding joy in his Father. He delighted in the Lord, praising and thanking him, and always wanting to be in his presence. Every day, he lived in prayer, constantly in conversation with his Father as well as the formal moments of worship, in synagogue and temple. He called the temple, **my Father's house**.

Ash Wednesday, recently past, reminds us that our reality is ashes. The pandemic has shown us that we human beings face limitations. Thinking that we can have it all, have God-like powers, and can have control over our destiny, is wrong. Floods, the outbreak of war, world-wide catastrophes of climate change, should surely humble us. The normal strategy is to rely on self but it is just not working. Use Lent to clear the space so that God can fill it. To be fully alive and fully human we need to turn down the dial of activities, do less so that you can become more authentic, more trusting and more Christ-like. Let the Word be our strength, let worship be our peace, so that inner need to be someone is overcome by the presence of the Lord. Let us not use God to serve us but use our faith serve him and to love others.

One of the disciplines of Christian living is self-examination, to recognise appetite, approval and ambition. Christians train the conscience by reading the word but if you are not in the word of God, how could you expect to live by it? If you want something that truly satisfies beyond the superficial and materialist appetites, let the Holy Bible be your strength, let worship be your joy, and aim to like others rather than be liked by them.