

Hunger
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Steven M Conger

(Luke 4:1-13 NRSV) Jesus, 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.

Today is the first Sunday in Lent. Lent actually began last Wednesday as we gathered here to commit ourselves to a journey of 40 days that will take us with Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem and ultimately to the Cross and ending with Easter → the celebration of Jesus resurrection.

Lent, is intended to be a time of reflection and introspection.

We reflect on the life and ministry of Jesus and seek to find ways to allow that life to transform us.

Now if you are a math whiz you have already noticed that Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday doesn't equal 40 days. That is because the six Sundays in Lent are not considered a part of Lent. Each Sunday is seen as a "Little Easter".

Thus they are not a part of the season.

During this season, many people will give up things that are important to them to remind them of the sacrifice that Jesus made.

People give up all kinds of things

- Meat on Fridays
- Pop
- Deserts
- Popcorn
- Tea
- Alcohol

We give up things, not to prove how tough or resilient we are, but rather to try to experience some level of discomfort, so that we might have a sense of the sacrifice that Jesus made when he was murdered on the cross.

During this season of Lent, Nathan and I will be preaching a series of sermons that will have HUNGER as its common theme.

What are the things that we hunger for?

This week as I was working on these sermons I thought of the Munster and Bishop Noll basketball teams that were hungering for two wins on Saturday to move on in the State Championships.

Or the Munster boys hockey team, that also hungered for a win yesterday to win the state hockey tournament.

I asked on FACEBOOK what people hunger for and some of the answers were:

- More time in my day
- To know God better
- Peace in our hearts, our homes, our world
- an end to all the violence,
- the need for people to respect human life and accept people who are different from ourselves

As I read those answers I began to think about what it means to ***hunger***.

When I ask, what do you HUNGER for? What does that mean to you?

What does it mean to be hungry?

I decided to look up the word to see how the dictionary defines it:

1. a compelling need or desire for food.
2. the painful sensation or state of weakness caused by the need of food: *to collapse from hunger*.
3. a shortage of food; famine.
4. a strong or compelling desire or craving: *hunger for power*.

For our purposes, we are going to focus on that last definition: **A strong or compelling desire or craving.**

What does it mean to really hunger for something?

Our scripture this morning is the story of Jesus going into the wilderness fasting for 40 days, and while there, experiencing temptation by the devil.

Luke 4:1-13 (The Message)

Now Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wild. For forty wilderness days and nights he was tested by the Devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when the time was up he was hungry.

The Devil, playing on his hunger, gave the first test: "Since you're God's Son, command this stone to turn into a loaf of bread."

Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy: "It takes more than bread to really live."

For the second test he led him up and spread out all the kingdoms of the earth on display at once. Then the Devil said, "They're yours in all their splendor to serve your pleasure. I'm in charge of them all and can turn them over to whomever I wish. Worship me and they're yours, the whole works."

Jesus refused, again backing his refusal with Deuteronomy: "Worship the Lord your God and only the Lord your God. Serve him with absolute single-heartedness."

For the third test the Devil took him to Jerusalem and put him on top of the Temple. He said, "If you are God's Son, jump. It's written, isn't it, that 'he has placed you in the care of angels to protect you; they will catch you; you won't so much as stub your toe on a stone'?"

"Yes," said Jesus, "and it's also written, 'Don't you dare tempt the Lord your God.'"

That completed the testing. The Devil retreated temporarily, lying in wait for another opportunity.

The devil in this passage seems to understand that we all HUNGER for many things.

- Fame
- Success
- Recognition
- Material things
- Power

But Jesus is not taken in.

He refuses to accept the hungers of the world, as the ones that we should be craving.

Jay Martel in Rolling Stone wrote a number of years ago: "Everything's a flash in the pan, so why not get the most out of your flash?"

That seems to be the call of our culture.

"Grab for all the Gusto you can" → Schlitz once challenged us.
Today Nike says: "Just Do It"

The problem is → instant gratification doesn't last.

But it is the siren's call of our lives.

We all are looking for the quick fix.

Whether it is playing the stock market → where we expect a huge return on our investment without us doing anything other than calling our stock broker.

Or buying lottery tickets.

I was talking to someone who wanted to buy a headstone for their mother's grave and didn't have any money. He told me he was buying lottery tickets every week so that he could win and buy the headstone. Certainly, God would look kindly on that idea, he thought.

We want a quick fix!

We don't want to have to skimp and scrap together --- to sacrifice --- to buy the things we want. We want them NOW!
I suggested to this person that he take the money that he was spending every week on lottery tickets and begin to save it. That was the best chance he would ever have of buying a headstone for his mother's grave --- but that would take time --- a lot of time.

We want it NOW!

This "quick fix" or "flash-in-the-pan" mentality was part of the temptation Jesus faced when he spent his 40 days in the wilderness.

After all, the Devil suggested he turn a stone into bread, saying, in effect:
"Go ahead, Jesus - get it while you can!"

And he offered him all the kingdoms of the world:
"Go ahead, Jesus - get them however you can!"

And he tested him by challenging him to throw himself off the temple and into the hands of God:
"Go ahead, Jesus - grab hold of the Lord's protection as fast as you can!"

What's interesting is that God was already working to provide Jesus with all these tantalizing things.

They would come to him eventually . . . at the right time, in the right place.

- Jesus would certainly be fed with nourishing bread.
- And he would definitely become the cosmic King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
- Jesus would even be rescued from the finality of death by the power of God.

But not yet.

We just don't get it.

But Jesus did.

Jesus knew that temptation is so often connected to impatience.

We hunger for something that is really quite innocent in itself - a piece of bread, a chance to be a leader, a sign from God - but we get into trouble because we want it now.

We're unwilling either to wait for it or to work for it, so we take shortcuts - and end up getting into trouble.

Picture this: You're hungry, you crave an elegant meal, you walk into a five-star restaurant. You order up a feast - one you really can't afford - enjoy it immensely, and then charge the whole thing on your credit card. Then, because you can manage only to make the minimum payment on your monthly balance, you pay for this dinner for years and years and years, and your hundred-dollar meal ends up costing you thousands and thousands.

The problem is wanting it now.

But that is not the only problem.

Sure we have to learn to understand timing on things.

That we need to wait, and save before we can have things that we can't afford. And that is a hard lesson for us.

But the bigger issue is **learning to hunger for the right things.**

Instead of craving a vibrant relationship with the God who made us, we settle for a house, a family, a few friends, a job, a TV and DVD, and a yearly vacation. We think we can survive with this and just a bit of religion.

Yet our souls starve!

Frederick Buechner, author and theologian, tells of a twelve-year-old who, in a fit of rage, killed his father. Later a guard was walking down the hall where the boy was being held and heard him whimpering. When he neared the door to the youngster's room, he heard him crying, "I want my father. I want my father." That is the sobbing that can be heard all around us — even though people may not know what or whom they are crying for. But the things we accumulate in life can't satisfy us and can't give us purpose.

Maggie Ross writes:

"We try to fill up that ghastly hole in the pit of our stomachs that is really in our souls. We try to fill it with food, with power, with sex. . . We begin to realize that this hunger will never be satisfied, not in this life. It is the hunger for the Face of God"

So instead of hungering for all our wants → and imagining that we can't live without them → we need to learn to hunger for the things of God.

For the next four weeks we will look at some of the things that God desires us to hunger for.

- Justice
- Relationships
- Reconciliation
- Service

Those things are hard and take work.

We all want them? But are we willing to work for them?

Are we hungry enough for the things of God that we are willing to sacrifice to make them happen.

Over the next four weeks, as we examine these things that God calls us to hunger for, there is no easy fix or solution.

Being a Christian is not for the faint of heart.

But it is the way of Jesus.

A journey that we have chosen to take.