**St. David’s Episcopal Church**

Bean Blossom, Indiana

Year C, Lent 1

March 6, 2022

**Sermon by the Rev. Kate Wilson**

### Deuteronomy 26:1- 11 Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16 Romans 10:8b-13 Luke 4:1-13

### ✠ 13When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

**Let’s review.**

*Luke Chapter 3, Verse 21:* Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, 22and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved;\* with you I am well pleased.’\*

*Luke, Chapter 4, Verse 1:* 1Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 2where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.

Jesus is out in nowhere land, in complete deprivation. He is eating nothing, seeing no one, speaking with no one but his Father. The devil has been tempting him for forty consecutive days! Just give me five minutes with a Hersey bar! Jesus has become weaker. Jesus may have been full of the Holy Spirit, but 40 days of temptation is a long, long time. At the end, at Jesus’s weakest point, the devil brings out the big guns of temptation: food to someone who is starving, power to someone who is weak, and glory to someone virtually unknown.

What on earth could be a more opportune time than this?

Does anyone here play the computer game “Angry Birds”? In it, pigs steal bird eggs to eat, and the birds have various skills to fight them off and destroy them. But in the background, looming, is the head pig, the most powerful and malicious pig, who flies about on a 17th century sailing ship in the sky, threatening to enter the scene again. And when the head pig returns, the birds must fight for their lives, and the player can literally go broke helping them. The head pig always waits for a more opportune time and plays on the players compassion, pride, and competitive spirit to pay real money to save the poor birds. The game developers know exactly how to tempt us humans. So do many marketers, as you know.

The devil returns throughout Jesus’s ministry, usually tormenting people who beg Jesus to cure them, but it seems the devil never found that more opportune time. Even as Jesus was suffering and dying on the cross, he was tempted through the mouths of common people, soldiers, scribes, chief priests, and elders who jeered. “Hey, Jesus, you’ve saved others – but you can’t save yourself?” “We will believe you if you just get down from that cross…” Yet Jesus was resolute. “it is said, do not put the Lord you God to the test.” (v. 12) If only we had his strength and clarity of purpose. Worth working toward.

Jesus never sought the easy way. I sometimes wonder why he didn’t just dazzle everyone, unify us all, and bringing the kingdom that was near to the here and now, exiling the outliers. Perhaps that’s the reason. Living in perfect love, there would be no reason to expand our abilities to love. And there would always be outliers, there would always be attacks, because that is also part of the human condition. It seems that where there is goodness, evil cannot be far behind, waiting for a more opportune time.

I feel sick watching the suffering of the people in Ukraine, feeling powerless to help. I firmly believe that Jesus does not call us only to send money to solve problems, but to use our bodies as Jesus’s hands and feet and heart. But sometimes the only things we can do are to pray fervently and to donate. But be warned. Where there is goodness, evil finds the opportune time. There are many scammers raising money online in the name of Ukraine, but it is the scammers who hope to pocket every cent. If you give, when you give, choose your method wisely. I trust Episcopal Relief and Development, Catholic Charities, and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent. The Episcopal Church has been in Europe for over 200 years and has provided **wartime** aid within its parishes since the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. They continue today.

Episcopal Relief and Development is partnering with the ACTAllianceand Anglican and Episcopal Churches in Europe. The ACTAlliance is 137 church bodies, such as the Episcopal Church, partnering to provide humanitarian aid worldwide, For example, ACTAlliance already has the infrastructure worldwide, and is working through a Hungarian church to provide refugee aid on the **Ukrainian** side of their border. Our part of the Body of Christ can support these exhausted parts of the Body of Christ directly, meaningfully, and generously. They need everything: food, blankets, all the basics. I have included a weblink for donation at the end of this sermon.

Let us each also set aside a specific time to pray for Ukraine and set an alarm to remind us. Some time that is outside of our most hectic hours of the day.

Bishop Bonnie Perry of Michigan asks “People of faith, watching and feeling the political tectonic plates of our world shift and collide. How do we stand? Where is our sure footing? What are we called to do? Pray my friends,” Perry said. “Pray in a way you never have before. Pray with the passion and responsibility of the people who are being called to heal.”

There is also a short prayer in today’s bulletin that was written by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and Archbishop John Cottrell of York. Take it home. Put it on your refrigerator. And don’t leave it to those with special hats to create prayers: post your own prayers and others you find on our Facebook page.

Temptation, generosity, and prayer. Whenever temptation turns to guilt, write down the whole process in a Lenten notebook and meditate about what is behind it. That will lead to freedom through Lenten journey. Express generosity of goods and your spirit for all those who suffer. And pray for Ukraine and all the leaders who are joined to condemn evil and provide help. In a little while, we will have the opportunity to pray earnestly for some generous souls in our own midst, our newly formed Search Committee for a new rector for St. David’s. Let’s give that prayer our all.

Thanks be to God.

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**Jesus’s Baptism in Four Gospels**

*Matthew 3:* 16And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved,\* with whom I am well pleased.’ Followed by days in wilderness.

Mark 1: 9In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. 11And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved;\* with you I am well pleased.’ Followed by wilderness.

*Luke Chapter 3, Verse 21:* Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, 22and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved;\* with you I am well pleased.’\*

*Luke, Chapter 4, Verse 1:* 1Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 2where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.

John 1: 30-34 30This is he of whom I said, “After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.” 31I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.’ 32And John testified, ‘I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, “He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” 34And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.’\* *John does not mention the words of God, “This is my son…” and does not include the time in the wilderness or the temptations.*

**Episcopal Relief and Development link for Ukraine:** : *It took a few extra seconds for this to open on my computer.*

<https://www.episcopalrelief.org/press-resources/press-releases/2022-press-releases/supporting-humanitarian-response-to-the-crisis-in-ukraine/>

**Episcopal Church Response to Ukraine in Episcopal News Service**

<https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2022/03/01/episcopal-leaders-pray-for-ukraine-as-russian-forces-bring-death-destruction-to-country/>