

During the season of Lent, we will be engaging in a sermon series called, *By His Wounds, We are Healed*. Each Sunday, we will look at the wounds that are presented in scripture. Some are personal wounds and some are universal, wounds we share in humanity. We all have wounds that can distance us from God. I invite you during this season of Lent to reflect and explore what distances you from Christ and commit to ways to bridge the distance, to draw near to Christ as we draw closer to the cross. Because of Christ's love and sacrifice, we can be healed of our wounds and draw closer to Christ.

The wound in the scripture today is one we all experience, even Jesus. Temptation. We have our own personal temptations that distract us from the Spirit's leading, but the three temptations in the scripture are ones that we all experience as part of humanity. Ignatius of Loyola names them as pride, power, and privilege.<sup>1</sup> But, really, pride and privilege are rooted in power. Most temptations are rooted in power – who holds it and who desires to hold it. We are tempted to be in control and we give in to our own selfish desires that grant us a sense of feeling powerful, instead of trusting God to be all-powerful.

The temptation of Christ is told in three of the gospels. Mark says, "The Spirit immediately drove Jesus out into the wilderness" after his baptism (Mark 1:12). Luke says he was full of the Holy Spirit, after the dove descended upon him at his baptism, and was immediately led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Luke 4:1). Mark and Luke both say the Spirit led Jesus to the

wilderness and that he experienced temptation while there.

Only Matthew says that he was led to be tested. Why did Matthew feel that Jesus was led to be tested? Why does Jesus need to be tested? We all know the outcome. We know he's going to pass. If anyone can pass the test, it's him! We know he won't be fooled by Satan's deception.

The tempter played the same game with Jesus as he did with Eve. The adversary has a one-track mind – to get everyone to disobey God and to seek to hold power like God, to seek to become God. That's what Lucifer did. He wanted to become God. He turned his back on God and has tried to get humanity to do the exact same thing. Misery loves company.

Satan approaches Adam and Eve: If you eat from the tree, you'll be like God. Jesus in his humanity is not off limits: If you turn these stones into bread, you won't be hungry. If you jump off this roof, you won't have to be tested anymore, the angels will save you. If you worship me, you'll have all the earth in your power. That wasn't even something the tempter could give him; it was already his. Many times, our temptations don't even make sense. They are steeped in lies and deception as we feel the pull for the quest of power to be like God.

Satan, the adversary, really wanted Jesus to disobey God and go against who God created Jesus to be. God created him to be humble and to lead us in self-less living. So, the adversary wants Jesus to do the opposite. He tried to get Jesus to save himself. If Jesus had used his power to feed himself, he was living to satisfy his own

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<sup>1</sup> Wendy Wright, *Disciplines 2020*, 84.

physical needs. He wasn't trusting God to take care of his needs.

If Jesus had taken matters into his own hands and ended his time in the wilderness, he would've saved himself instead of saving others. Using his power for his own gain was not what God created him to do. God created Jesus to walk humbly and to live so closely with the Spirit that he would know who he is and what he is supposed to do. Because he was full of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was confident in his purpose, and basically said, "Not today, Satan."

When the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, he followed because he trusted God. When the Spirit leads us, we follow because we trust God. We know God holds the power, and we trust God will send angels to care for us. We know God will feed us and will save us in the wilderness. When we are full of the Spirit, we recognize the adversary's deception, and have the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome our pull for power.

When we are filled with the Spirit and live by the Spirit's leading, we do hold the power, the power of the Holy Spirit. Not the power to be God, but the power to overcome our selfish tendencies. It won't be used for selfish gain or to save ourselves, but it will be used to do what God has created us to do. We already have the power to live as God created us to live -- in humility, service, and devotion to God.

Temptation can be a wound for us because we all desire to hold the power. Satan wanted it. Adam and Eve wanted it. We all want to be powerful and feel powerful because in reality, we aren't, not on our own; not without the Spirit. Because of humanity's limited power, we

feel powerless and seek to be powerful.

Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit and he held the power of the Holy Spirit, so he didn't fall for the opposition's deception. He was confident of who he was and that his power was to be used for serving others. Knowing that, he knew he could trust God to take care of all of his needs. Jesus joined us in humanity, so he experienced everything we experience -- even temptation. He was tested to show us how to overcome it and how to live the life God created us to live.

During this season of Lent, during this time in the wilderness, be filled with the Holy Spirit and know that we are being led by the Spirit. Trust that God will satisfy our needs and will send angels to care for us. Continue to live as God has created us to live. During this Lenten journey and beyond, may we stay close to the Spirit. Amen.