

Lent C1, 2007

Luke 4: 1-13

February 25, 2007

Title: Bible Reading and Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

ARMED ROBBERY AT WENDYS. That was the heading on page 9 in Friday's North Raleigh News section of our paper.

The gist of the article: A man hid in a Wendy's after closing time before revealing himself and robbing the restaurant. According to detective Jim Sughrue, "It does not appear the robbery itself took any longer than five minutes." All five employees of the restaurant were unharmed.

According to a map accompanying the article that Wendy's is just off Glenwood Avenue, barely 4 miles from here. Imagine that. Someone hiding Inside, waiting, lurking, coming out when you least expect it, nabbing the goods.

All 5 employees unharmed!
What will those folks do the next night they report for work?
How can they possibly not look at every customer now through
Cautious eyes? Or at a bulging
coat pocket? Will they now profile
Certain people who bear the same look as the robber?
How will they trust again?

The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness can read like a section of the Jerusalem Times. THIS JUST IN FROM THE WILDERNESS. When Jesus was hungry the tempter slipped in. Not just once but three times. In an interview with Luke Jesus said "It is written, it is written, it is written." He quoted the book of Deuteronomy three times. By all accounts he seemed unharmed.

Jesus was in the wilderness. Such a place evokes emptiness, uncertainty, questioning, loneliness. An awkward place for there your core identity is Up for grabs. It's Wendys after the robbery. We all have our wilderness. Jesus lived there, relying on God. So can we.

Jesus went to the wilderness after his baptism led by the spirit.
There through temptation he wrestled with vocation and identity, spirit led.

Would we have been a deeper people of faith when we
Finished this new building and new fellowship hall to taken a
Wilderness walk, to fast and pray about who we are now to be?
To do as Jesus did—and wrestle with what He wants us to become?

When I find myself
In prayer about our 25th anniversary goals, my prayer has been that
We will not be the same people in 2008 after having invested ourselves
In these 8 goals.

Could it be that such things as supporting Joy of Discovery,
Mnene Parish and Costa Rica, bringing here three seminary interns,
Building a house for Habitat—this is our wilderness place
To test the meaning of our mission of believing,
Belonging and serving. That here we are being
Led to discover our vocation, to clarify who we
Are. And that the risks are high---

We just learned this week that some of the youth of Joy of Discovery which
is a multi-racial congregation in Southeast Raleigh
While participating with Lutheran youth in our Synod experienced subtle
racial discrimination. I heard about it; now you've heard about it.
Have we not been led by the spirit to walk with these our new brothers and
sisters in Christ?

“There is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord
is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For everyone
who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved.”

There it is. Paul names the reality to which we are called. It is a different
reality than the world lives by. It is a new family. The Body of Christ. A
mark of discipleship is to hold up before ourselves the mirror of scripture.

Carol Henderson has a real calling to teach us about worship. She has a class
of worship going right now. She offered one in the fall and it was canceled.
I suggested that maybe folks
Would learn about worship simply by coming here

And worshipping.

I think I'm wrong. When tempted to become a world ruler Jesus quotes scripture: Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.

Jesus had reflected on the nature of worship and it's power.

It's been suggested that worship involves tending to reality, to be formed by God's reality.

Here God's story of salvation gets rehearsed and remembered, so we

Can also weed out the false stories of powers and principalities, the Stories of domination. Through worship we

Come before the one true story and we are to let this

Story remake us, wash over us, shape us, cruciform us!

Otherwise we forget who we are!

After 40 years of Bible teaching Fleming Rutledge offers this about American Christians: "There is a much loved American answer to every theological and ethical dilemma: freedom of the will. By making right choices, we believe, we can move out of the dominion of sin. The implication of this is, I have moved out of the grip of Sin; why haven't you?"

We forget our story if we hold to such ideas. The scripture is about The rescue of God of us bound up in sin and it's consequences. The Human heart is in conflict with itself, in the grip of sin.

When the people of ancient Israel were about to enter their promised land They enacted a ritual. They worshipped. Together they were each to say A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; we went down to Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; The Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression, And the Lord brought us out of Egypt.....

That's worship. Remembering who they are as children of The deliverer. Here is the place where we are to testify To our being delivered. To speak out loud the ways God in Jesus Has formed you!!

There are marks of discipleship to Jesus.

Identifiable practices which assist us in living our Baptism.
They keep us from the quiet and always present danger of forgetting
Who and whose we are.
In the wilderness Jesus refused to forget. Fortified with
Scripture and with prayer he counteracts the temptor.

We see Jesus in danger of losing himself, of giving in to the false stories of
domination voiced by satan.

He asks Jesus to forget who he is. Jesus refuses to forget. Armed with
scripture and prayer Jesus after each temptation rehearses the story of life so
it can wash over him, giving him courage to continue his faithfulness as
God's love made flesh for the sake of the world.

May God in Christ write his story again and again in our hearts and form us
with Bible reading and prayer. So that we bring to him our very real
temptations, trusting that he will guide us, even if we work at Wendys.
And strip the temptor of his power.
Amen.