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CHRIST our HOPE

Temptations in Ministry

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Christ's ministry begins with the Blessing of the Spirit, the Father's voice of love and affirmation. From the start he knew he was beloved and he belonged. That is what Son means—you are mine, in my family. Those two essential blessings are given by God from the beginning. We all desperately need to know that we are profoundly cared for and wanted, but the truth is we go into ministry seeking these blessings from other people or believing they will somehow be our reward.

Trevor Walters one of the Canadian Bishops who works with to help bishops and clergy find healing from their brokenness speaks of it this way—we all have wounded hearts and wear them so to speak, strapped to our arms like dented cups. And then we walk through life hoping other people will put something in our cups because we are so needing them to help us fill it up. We get hurt and we hurt others because of our neediness. But these things have to be given to us on the front end... we will not find them from our ministries, our success, or the people we minister to.

But despite having a full cup so to speak—In the wisdom and goodness of God , Jesus is still driven by the Spirit into the wilderness. It is important to pause and consider that—belovedness and belongingness are not the result of ministering well and neither are they a protection from the heartaches of life.

And in truth, our own wilderness times show up in all kinds of ways, and not on a schedule we can predict or control. As hard as it seems they are gifts. If these wildernesses did not come, we would have a hard time really seeing that the Spirit—the life of God within us-- is what gives our ministries vitality...

and without having received the mercy and grace of God for ourselves in the midst of our own brokenness and losses we can't be living conduits of the mercy and love of God to others. Yes, we can talk about these things intellectually or theoretically, but they do not flow through us.

This morning we will enter into a Lectio time with temptation story in Luke 4. Lectio is an opportunity to sit with God's word and your own heart – Lectio is not the work of the head but the work we do from the deep center of who we are.... In the quiet of Lectio we pray our whole being—mind, emotions, body -- wake up to encounter Jesus, the living Word of God.

Lectio calls us into quiet, into reflection into a deeper listening...

The Nature of Temptation

It is not a downer or moralistic warning to talk about temptation—life is a challenge. It is more like a team watching game film in preparation for their next game. You want to understand your opponent, know how to meet his strength with a solid defense and a strong offense.

So:

- Temptations are common to man - 1Cor 12.
- We are up against a lot in this life: world flesh and the devil - Ephesians 2.
- Temptations are particularly shaped to make us believe God won't come through for us.
- They are rip tide currents that take us away from the love and presence of God.
- They rarely look that bad on the front end. They lie! The book of Proverbs warns young leaders again and again that it takes growing wisdom to dismantle the deceit that temptations work through the evil one, the world, and our own flesh rarely come to us with an invitation to "wreck our own life." What we are begin drawn away by looks good (James 1) but it leads to death.

A Few Words About Jesus

- A high priest who can sympathize with our weakness who was tempted in every way like we are. He will help! Hebrews 4:14 (As we struggle with the pain and hurt of life we can always ask Jesus - how did you experience a suffering like this?? And if we sit with that question we will find ourselves as Philippians 3:10 and 11 say, being drawn into deep intimacy with Jesus. We cannot know Jesus without being willing to participate in the fellowship of his sufferings and conformity to his death).
- A high priest who learned the cost of obedience by what he suffered. Heb 5:8.
- A high priest who prays for us - Heb 7:25. Our shame often keeps us from asking for real prayer.

Lectio Divina

On one hand the temptations are about the inauguration of the messianic ministry of Jesus - but scripture is a mirror to see ourselves well. Our encounter with the scripture is to pierce our hearts - not just tell us what do, think, or believe - scripture is given that we can learn to say yes to God with our whole being.

I am going to ask you to accept two things as we begin this lectio:

- These three temptations express core issues we all face as humans
- These temptations particularly reveal the core temptations of ministry

Now as you enter into this lectio time, hold this question before God and ask him to speak to your own heart. Ask him and ask your own heart, what is the core lie you so easily believe that lies behind each temptation? In truth these lies reveal something about our woundedness and our false selves.

Do not forget that the goal in all this is not that we become moralistic, uptight people determined to fashion our own righteousness, the goal of facing temptation well is to see our freedom, our joy, and our ability to love flourish. We learn to count on God not ourselves and we see him refashioning our lives, so we are indeed more like Christ.

Surrender Prayer

Lord, I surrender my demandingness for security and survival.
Lord, I surrender my demandingness for esteem and affection.\

Lord, I surrender my demandingness for power and control.