

## **Barre Congregational Church**

**March 6, 2022: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser**

**~ First Sunday in Lent / Communion ~**

***"Do not put your Lord to the test"***

**Our sermons and previous worship services can be found on our website at**

**[www.barrechurch.com](http://www.barrechurch.com)**

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### **Scripture Reading: Luke 4 v 1-13**

#### **I. Introduction:**

As I wrote in the Spire this week, Lent is a period in the life of the church during which we have the opportunity to be silent, reflective and mindful of the sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and His journey to the cross. It is a time to be centered around that which is simple and modest, so we can give attention to the deeper spiritual aspects of our lives. It is about remembering Christ's intimate moments with God during which He found the spiritual fortitude and His greatest courage and inner peace to fulfil His mission on earth; and to walk the journey to the cross. He needed the quiet space with God for a world that needed His message of love and peace. His love for humanity, born from the heart of God, made Him into the ultimate Martyr for the salvation of humanity.

#### **II. Do not put the Lord Your God to the test!**

The tests or temptations by the devil described in our passage, are in essence meant to test Jesus' loyalty and faithfulness to God during a time when He is hungry, and physically and emotionally weak and vulnerable. Jesus finds Himself in the desert not by His own doing, but because He was led by the Holy Spirit to be in isolation and to pray and to be in close contact with God. This wilderness experience represents the wilderness experience of Israel in the Old Testament, where they too are tested and their loyalty to God is put to the test. While the Israelites often succumbed to their own personal needs and were led astray by the temptations to worship false gods, Jesus here stays firm in His defense against these very attractive temptations by the devil. If you're the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread, if you worship me, I will give you the authority and splendor of all the kingdoms of the world, and if you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from this temple, because somewhere in the Psalms it says He will command His angels concerning you. You will be protected. You will be provided with what you need here in

this horrendous wilderness, which is filled with venomous snakes and scorpions. Daring words aimed at Jesus as He is in close contact with God! These temptations require Jesus to remove His eyes from God. His physical struggles will gain His attention so much so that He will lose His inner strength and resolve here in the desert where He has a purpose.

What needs to be remembered, is described right at the beginning of this passage, that Jesus was full of the Spirit of God, and He was led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness. David Garland and Clinton Garrett describe it this way, that “Jesus is not seized by an external power but is the Bearer of the Spirit and is anointed by the Spirit”. He does not have to be filled, no, He is full of the Holy Spirit. He was conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit came down on Him at His baptism, and now He is led by the Spirit in the wilderness, after which He will drive out demons, and heal the sick through the power of the Spirit. Nothing will pull Him away from this intimate Spirit-filled experience with God.

Jesus does not only withstand evil, but He sees the plight of people through the power of the Holy Spirit and transforms the lives of people through this life filled with the Spirit. He therefore withstands the test of being offered food when He was hungry, He withstands the test of accepting the offer of incredible earthly kingdoms and refuses to worship Satan, and when He was harassed again to throw Himself off the Temple where His parents brought Him to as a child, and where He talked about His mission and purpose, He made it clear to Satan, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test” That’s it! Stop this now! He knew that to test God, was to fail to acknowledge God’s power, a deliberate attempt to dismiss and undermine the power of God. For Jesus Christ, God’s Kingdom is about transforming and healing lives, not destroying them, and so, He will not be tempted by an evil force to forget that.

### **III. Conclusion: Our Hope and our Help comes from our Lord!**

Because of this courageous Christ of ours, we have hope in the One who cares for us, when we are hungry, sick, vulnerable, and weak; the One who understand all these earthly struggles we go through. We need not look around to see where our help comes from. Our help comes from our Spirit-filled Lord, Jesus Christ. Our help comes from God in heaven, whose Spirit is with us, in us. And so, when we pray and call to God when we are in need, our prayers are being heard in the highest places at the throne of God. We need only allow the Spirit of God to fill us, as our

Christ was filled with the same Spirit, and as Christ is sitting at the Right Hand of God, we now have access to the Spirit of God always.

May we hold onto this during this period of Lent. When we pray for others, let us allow the Spirit of God to give us the internal peace, hope and faith that things will be ok, because our prayers are not our own, but the Holy Spirit helps us to utter the words, sees our tears and our dreams and desires. Amen