

God is Enough So We Are Enough
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The story of Jesus being tempted by the devil is both familiar and puzzling to many of us. It's an exciting story, but it's very possible we aren't exactly sure what is going on, or why it matters to the story or to us. So it's helpful to keep in mind that that Luke is making a comparison between Jesus' life and ministry and that of Moses and the ancient Israelites on their exodus journey out of Egypt and toward the Promised Land. The Wilderness is where we come to the end of ourselves.

Luke 4:1-13 NRSV

4:1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. 3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." 4 Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.' "

Many people were hoping for a new Moses to lead a new exodus. Could Jesus meet this expectation by transforming one thing into another like Moses staff became a snake? Could he provide manna the way Moses did?

5 Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. 7 If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." 8 Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.' "

While the devil didn't "own" the world, the devil held sway over human hearts. The offer was not the planet, but the people. Bow to me, the devils says, and I will set you up as the political Messiah everyone says you are supposed to be.

9 Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, 10 for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' 11 and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.' "
12 Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' " 13 When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

The devil here is upping the test by quoting Psalm 91:11–12, but he quotes it out of context. What the Psalmist says in faith, the devil distorts to sow seeds of doubt. The Israelites put God to the test repeated while they were in the wilderness, but Jesus never forgets who God is, never forgets who he is, and so he is uninterested in testing the love relationship. He knows it is solid. The devil knows it too, at the end, and departs.

The Devil's three temptations push Jesus to have to answer the question: Am I enough?

We face the same temptations and the same nagging question. The tests push us to ask the ourselves – consciously or unconsciously – the *Am I Enough?* question every waking moment of the day. The Am I Enough? question is imbedded in the temptations.

Stones-to-bread: Am I capable enough?

Can I do what needs to be done?

Kingdoms of the World: Am I powerful enough?

Can I control how things will turn out?

Leap from the top of the Temple: Am I spectacular or heroic enough?

Can impress others enough that they will say that I matter?

Every day we are led by the Spirit out in the world. And every day we are tested. We may feel that, like Israel, we have been led out to the wilderness of real life totally unequipped and unprepared. But we have been baptized, sealed with the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus was. We have enough.

Jesus responds with scriptures from Deuteronomy, which were the instructions God gave to Moses for the Israelites during their 40 years in the wilderness. Luke wants his readers to know that where Israel failed, Jesus succeeded. To each of the devil's questions, "Are you enough?" Jesus provides a scriptural response, "No, and I don't need to be. Who I am as God's beloved is enough. It is enough because God is enough."

Because you are loved, as God's beloved, you are enough. Not because of what you can do. Not because of how others see you. Not because of how powerful you are. But because you are claimed as God's own. You are God's child. There is no greater thing you can be. The Devil tempts us in order to get us wondering if God's love is conditional, or if it's even real.

The "you" God loves and holds is not your False Self, but your True Self. It's your False Self that tells you that you have to make yourself be "enough." You need appear relevant, competent, and in control, or else know one will hire you, or befriend you, or include you.

The devil essentially tempts Jesus to live into the False Self everyone is looking for. And Jesus resists it. In so doing, Jesus shows what it looks like to embrace our True Self. Having rejected the glittering images, having refused to get caught up in the False Self, Jesus is able to complete his wilderness experience never forgetting who he is, or why he has come into the world.

Jesus will leave this place and begin his ministry from a place of true power and groundedness. Living as his True Self – the Son sent to reconcile the world to God and to itself – Jesus will enter the synagogue, pick up the Isaiah scroll, proclaim freedom to the captives, and say: “This word is being fulfilled in me, right here and right now.”

This path always leads us through wilderness – the place where we come to the end of ourselves. We often speak of Lent as journey. It’s a good metaphor. We can think of Lent as an opportunity to let the Holy Spirit lead us into the wilderness so we can come to the end of ourselves and experience the God-Who-Is-Enough.

We don’t take this journey alone. So this week, **tell someone that they are enough.**

We don’t take this journey without provisions. Jesus provides himself, his very spirit, here at the Table.