



*Rock Tumbler: The Temptations of Jesus
Luke 4:1-13*

*The First Sunday in Lent, Sunday, March 10th, 2019
First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois
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Text: 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. (Luke 4:1-2a)

My father-in-law was a man who had to always be busy. As a consequence he was also a man of many hobbies; vegetable gardening, roses, latch-hook rugs, and rock polishing. When he died I was “bequeathed” his rock polisher. It was a rubber canister about six inches in diameter that set upon a motorized base that would spin it over and over and over.

Rock polishing takes a lot of time and patience. You take a handful of stones to be polished, drop them in the canister, add some water and grit, seal, and set it on the base. Then you wait as the canister spins day after day after day. After several weeks, you remove the stones from the canister, add water and a finer grit, and repeat the process. You did this over and over until after a few months the stones are removed a final time, rinsed off, and reveal their shiny beauty, a beauty that had been hidden. It is the grit and the rubbing against one another that reveals their true character. So it is with temptation. Over the course of a lifetime, temptation reveals are true character.

What is your greatest temptation? My wife once observed in a sermon that we are not tempted by that which we don't desire or want. For example, if you don't like chocolate, you will not be tempted by either a fresh batch of chocolate chip cookies or Ghirardelli chocolate squares.

In the first book of the Bible, Genesis, we read that the first of our kind were tempted by “the fruit of the tree that produced fruit that was good to eat, pleasing to the eye, and desirable for gaining wisdom.” (3:6)

Temptation comes in all different forms, shapes, and sizes. Some people are tempted by money or titles, others by control or power, still others by fame or recognition.

The story of Jesus' temptation is familiar to many, if not all of us. It occurred immediately after his baptism. And to me, the most interesting thing about his temptations is not what he was tempted with but the fact that he was led into the wilderness of temptation by the Spirit of God. His temptations were not accidental but intentional.

The story about Jesus' temptations per se but the choices Jesus made. Seek first the Kingdom of God and God's righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you, Jesus told those who would take him seriously. In his response to temptation Jesus placed his ultimate trust in God. In these 40 days of Lent we are to choose where we will ultimately place our trust.

“In life and death we belong to God”, or as the Letter to the Romans states it, If we live, we live unto the Lord and if we die, we die unto the Lord, so whether we live or whether we die, we belong to the Lord. (14:8)

In her commentary on this passage Lori Brandt Hale wrote that “there is a spiritual depth and power for life that is made possible as we respond in faith to the trials, troubles, and temptations of life”. Life’s temptations are the grit that reveals who we really are. The Table to which we are invited reminds us that as God provided manna to Israel in the Old Testament wilderness of the Sinai, so God’s angels ministered to Jesus. God still ministers to us by providing our daily bread for Life’s journey.

In this season of Lent we have a choice to make. Which do we trust more, God’s Providential care or the world?

To God be the glory, Amen.