

BLAINE MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
LENTEN SERIES 2016

FEARLESS: The Courage to Question

Worship Service • February 14, 2016

Fear/Less and the Life of Faith

• Introduction: Food for Thought •

*There are times when fear is good. It must keep its watchful place
at the heart's controls. - Aeschylus*

*I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph
over it. The brave man is not he does not feel afraid, but he who
conquers that fear. - Nelson Mandela*

*Eighty percent of all choices are based on fear. Most people don't
choose what they want; they choose what they think is safe.
- Phil McGraw*

*What is needed, rather than running away or controlling or
suppressing or any other resistance, is understanding fear; that
means, watch it, learn about it, come directly into contact with it.
We are to learn about fear, not how to escape from it.
- Jiddu Krishnamurti*

• The Word of God •

Read this passage in the spirit of a Lectio Divina, reading the text and letting your heart and mind and spirit move over the images as they seem to be led by the spirit of God, without boundaries or correct interpretations. See the colors, smell the aromas, feel the textures of things, follow the movements of people and watch their expressions and actions. Let God lead you by the power of the spirit as it flows over your imagination. Before reading, pray in silence for an open heart and mind and spirit, to reveal to you what God wants you to see, feel, know, believe.

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 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. The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.’ Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, “One does not live by bread alone.”’ Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 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. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.’ Jesus answered him, ‘It is written “Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”’ 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, for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you”, and “On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.”’ Jesus answered him, ‘It is said, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’ When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.”

~ Luke 4:1-13

What did you see? smell? touch? taste? hear? Don't look only for the profound, look also for the simple, mundane, everyday actions and experiences.

What did the devil in the story look like to you?

What impression do you get from the story as it reflects on the person of Jesus?

• Reflection Questions from Sermon •

1. What do you think are people's greatest fears today? Beyond those larger societal fears that you might list, what are the fears of your friends, the families in your social group/school, your church/community friends, or others?
2. Today... right now....what are your deepest fears, when you think of your life, your parents/children/grandchildren, your community and society?
3. How does news media, social media, television, etc. foment, intensify and even create our fears?
4. Does faith in God provide any source of help or support in addressing your fears? How does that happen for you?
5. What does it mean to you, to "trust God" in your life? Would this kind of trust help to allay your fears?
6. Are there people who have served as great examples of faith for you, whom you would wish to emulate in your life? When you think about them, do you think that they had fears? How do you think they managed them, to become beacons of faith for you and others?

• Notes from the Sermon - Rev. Derek Nakano •

please read this section after hearing today's sermon

- We live in a time of great fear - it is all around us, and inside of us, it is a part of every life and every relationship, in one way or another.
- The human mechanism called "fear" - it is an important part of the living of our days, and makes possible our human existence: it keeps us out of danger, it helps us to make good, informed choices, at its best it helps us to navigate through the storms of life, and gives us the ability to live out what we believe to be God's plans and purposes for our lives.
- Fear taken to its extreme, can paralyze us, alter our human sensory perception, overpower our values and beliefs, and keep us from living life as fully as we would like.
- The Question: How do we keep fear in play so we make good, wise discerning choices for our lives - but also keep fear in check so we are not paralyzed or consumed by it, so much so that we cannot fulfill what God intends for us and for our lives.
- Faith is not the absence of fear - faith helps us see clearly the reality and meaning of our fears, and helps us to use them constructively in the fulfillment of God's call upon our lives.
- In the scripture reading, Jesus - following his baptism and call to ministry is challenged by the devil/"adversary": to turn stones into bread, to worship the "adversary" and not God, to test God's care and providence instead of trusting in God's care. In each circumstance Jesus responds to these temptations by abiding trust in God, allowing his faith to order his values and actions, and to keep him focused on the One whose life gives him life.
- Faith and trust in God will not place us in a protective bubble, it does not guarantee that we will not be subject to the "slings and arrows" of life's disruptions, disasters and destructions; what faith in God does do is place us in the hands of a loving God who will be with us in whatever circumstances will befall us, will help us to make good choice in our lives, help us to find the pathway that will lead to fulfillment no matter what circumstances life will bring.