

Good cloudy morning from a cold hill in Rockport!

Yes, it's the first Sunday in Lent and the world is in a state of upheaval. For the past two years we experienced Lent through the upheaval of the Covid nightmare. This year it is the upheaval of the lives of our Ukrainian brothers and sisters, and the rest of us, due to the ruthless actions of a brutal dictator. The upheaval we feel here in the United States cannot compare to the upheaval of Ukrainians having to flee their homeland for safety, or having to make the decision to stay and fight for the sake of their homeland. This is an unconscionable time in our world, a time we never thought we would experience again after World War II. And yet, here we are.... From one day to the next, how are we to respond to this terrible and unexpected state of world affairs? I encourage you to make financial contributions, to the level you can, through a variety of organizations working to help our Ukrainian brothers and sisters. Pray for them. If you have Ukrainian friends, be in touch with them.... Let them know you support them. Ask them how you can help. I have been in touch with my friend, Natasha, in the south of Russia. I doubt she will be able to be in touch with me.

In Lent many of us either give up something, or take on a new task or challenge as we attempt to remember the challenges Jesus faced in his forty days in the wilderness, as we will think about this morning in our worship service. It's a choice we have, whether we *choose* to make it or not. Here is what I am going to attempt to do in Lent – from the time I wake up on Monday morning to the time I wake up on Tuesday morning, for each week of Lent, I am not going to use my iPhone or my laptop to check the news, my e-mails, or any of my usual daily “check ins.” I will attempt to keep silent, to step away from the stresses and challenges of each day, and to focus on the reason for this holy season, a time to be aware of conscience, of my shortcomings, and my good fortune. Come Tuesday morning of each week of Lent, I will return to my daily routines. If *everyone* in the world could just STOP for twenty-four hours one day each week, perhaps something good would happen... Perhaps that is a dream, a fantasy, a never-going-to-happen occurrence. But Jesus teaches us it is good to “step away” once in a while to pray and to rest. The New Testament tells us he did that numerous times in his short time of ministry. If you need to reach me during that weekly 24-hour period, don't hesitate to call my cell phone! I will pick up! But if it's something that can wait until Tuesday, thank you for that consideration. Will you give up something or take on a new task or challenge for Lent? It's your choice....

Blessings to each one this day.... Susan

p.s. I believe we will have a coffee hour after church this morning, as there were some goodies left over from the reception for Fred Bagnall's memorial service yesterday afternoon.... We will also share in holy communion by intinction this morning in our worship service – coming forward to receive the Bread and the Cup one-by-one....

**"Lead us not into temptation...."**

**A Sermon for the Federated Church in Thomaston**

**Thomaston, Maine**

**Sunday, March 6, 2022**

**Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet**

**Scripture: Luke 4:1-13, Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16**

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 him only.'"

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

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust."

Because you have made the Lord your refuge, the Most High your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot. I will protect those who know my name. When they call to me, I will answer them; I will be with the in trouble, I will rescue them and honor them. With long life I will satisfy them, and show them my salvation.

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

Will you pray with me. God of all life, lead us through the wilderness this day. Help us to look squarely at the temptations before us and see them for what they are. Give us inquiring minds and gentle hearts that we might separate good from evil and follow Jesus' way to your kingdom. Amen.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil..." We pray those words each Sunday from the prayer Jesus taught to his disciples. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen." We pray those words every Sunday, but do we believe them?

Our reading from the Gospel of Luke today is about temptation. It considers Jesus' time of temptation and trial in the wilderness for forty days. This text is always the focus for the first Sunday of Lent each year. It appears in three of the four Gospels. In Matthew and Luke, the telling of Jesus forty days in the

wilderness being enticed with the temptations offered to him by the devil are somewhat lengthy. Matthew's version of the story takes eleven verses.

Mark's version takes just two verses, "And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him." (Mk 1:12-13) For Mark, that's the whole story in a tidy two verse nutshell!

Luke's version takes thirteen verses to tell of Jesus' verbal wrestling match with the devil. It is those thirteen verses that draw our attention today.

All three of the accounts of this wilderness journey in Jesus' life follow the story of his baptism by the Holy Spirit in which a voice comes from heaven saying, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." (Matt 3:17, Mk 1:11, Lk 3:22)

Isn't it curious that immediately after the voice of God tells Jesus he's beloved, God's Spirit sends him out into the wilderness to undergo forty days of trial and temptation of the worst kinds? Kind of a strange baptismal or graduation present, don't you think? But those of you who are parents might agree with this philosophy -- "Here's the keys to the car, son. Your mother and I love you. Now, you have to learn on your own how to drive responsibly in the midst of many risks and dangerous obstacles. But, have a good time! Remember that we love you. Be careful, son."

Maybe God is saying to Jesus, "Here's the keys to the kingdom, Son. Now show me what you can do with the trials and temptations out there that are going to try to trip you up along the way. But don't forget..... I love you. Don't worry, I'll always have your back."

We can take many different avenues as we work our way through these Biblical texts. They are rich with multiple and intertwining meanings. They give evidence to brilliant and complex thinking and writing by our sacred ancestors two thousand years ago.

In my reading of our text for today, three words jumped off the page at me, "It is written..." Three times these words are spoken (Lk 4:4, 8, 10), and a fourth time they are implied in Jesus' words, "It is said..." (Lk 4:12)

In responses to the devil's enticements, Jesus responds three times with words written long before he was born that appear in the Book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures. Deuteronomy outlines the laws of God, as they

were known then, by which Israel is shown how its people can live as a community in good relation with God.

Jesus first responds to the challenge by the devil to turn stone into bread with the words from Deuteronomy, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" (Lk 4:4)

Then he responds to the offer from the devil of authority over all the world with the words from Deuteronomy, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" (Lk4:8)

Then the devil tries the same tactic, saying, "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.'" (Lk4:9-11)

If that sounds familiar, it's because it comes from the verses of Psalm 91 which is the psalm reading assigned for today in the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL).

And finally Jesus responds to the devil's calling on Scripture, again with words from Deuteronomy, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" (Lk 4:12)

This technique of supporting one's argument or point of view is called "proof texting." According to my *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, proof texting is "the citation of a single biblical verse as a justification for a theological argument or position."<sup>11</sup> Both Jesus and the devil use proof texting to support their own actions and words.

I use proof texting all the time -- especially when I talk about the importance of compassion and caring for others. "The Bible says....," I say, "love of God and neighbor are paramount over all other words of instruction." People who have a position or policy or opinion to uphold often call on the Bible to support their view -- be it the role of women in the church, or not; the power of politics in church life, or not; the relevance of one's sexual orientation, or not, to others; the authority of traditional marriage or polygamy traditions, or not, for the greater good of families.

I have been asked over the years where I take my authority from as a woman and ordained minister, when the New Testament clearly states that all of Jesus' twelve disciples were men. My response is always the same, "Tell me who was at

the tomb and first told to 'go and tell'? "The Bible says...." it was all women! The male disciples were not to be found at Jesus' tomb.

Let's face it, calling on the Bible as a source of authority for one's personal views is as common today as it was when Jesus and the devil were doing the calling. "It is written" is a powerful statement. It carries a lot of weight. It did then.... it does now....

You've probably seen the bumper stickers that say something like, "The Bible says it, so I believe it." The confounding thing about that statement is the Biblical authors makes so many conflicting and downright oppositional statements from beginning to end. The Bible says this, and this, and this. Then it says that, and that, and that, and many of the statements are in direct disagreement with one another.

Scripture can be read for good or for ill. The challenging question is which shall it be for us? Jesus calls on scripture to guide him into the paths of righteousness of God. The devil, and others of our time in history who would commit evil deeds, as in Ukraine right now, are calling on religion to support their own causes, whether they be social, or political, not the causes of a compassionate and loving God.

In Lent we call on the scriptures to guide us through forty days of introspection, spiritual housecleaning, if you will. We try to determine if we are following a path towards union with God, through Jesus, or if we are off on a lark seeing only our own reflections in our interactions with others.

This is tough stuff. If we follow Jesus' lead, we affirm that bread, of a food or material kind, is not all we need. We need human and spiritual sustenance. We need love and understanding and affirmation.

The words we affirm.... the rules we site.... the Bible verses we quote.... matter. *Whether we use them to build up the body of Christ, or tear it apart, is one of the most important decisions we make in our relations with one another and with God.*

The story of Jesus' time in the wilderness while he is tempted by the devil comes at the beginning of his short time in ministry. Jesus had to make choices about how he would respond to that wilderness experience with the devil. We have choices to make, too....

The quoting of biblical texts we proclaim as true and trustworthy, says volumes about how we understand what it means to be people of faith.... people on

a journey.... followers of Jesus Christ.... beloved children of God. Jesus gains the upper hand with the devil's temptations in the wilderness through the use of proof texting via the holy scriptures.

Here's two questions for us today: What will our proof texting tell others about us? What will it tell them about our belief in a compassionate God?

Let the people say, "Amen!"

**Federated Church in Thomaston**

**United Church of Christ    United Methodist Church**

**All Are Welcome**

**Sunday, March 6, 2022 – First Sunday in Lent**

Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet, Pastor    Alice Billheimer, Organist/ Choir Director

Lector: Gerry Zwick

*Please be respectfully silent once our worship service has begun.*

*An asterisk (\*) indicates where you are invited to stand.*

***Bold print** indicates that the people speak these responses & prayers.*

## **GATHERING FOR WORSHIP**

### **Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude** Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee, Based on the traditional hymn tune "Durham"

### **Call to Worship**

Pastor: O God, in the wilderness of our lives, we place our faith in Christ who conquered all the forces of evil.

**People: During these days of Lent, may we be strengthened by his Spirit, so that we might serve you by raising our voices against the evils in our world.**

**All: Let us remember that we do not go forward alone. Let us worship God!**

**\*Opening Hymn** "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" #237 (red hymnal)

**A Prayer for the people of the Ukraine** (Susan will hand out)

**A Moment of Silence**

## **SERVICE OF THE WORD**

**Scripture Reading**    Luke 4:1-13

**\*Gloria Patri No. 70 Glory Be to the Father....**

**Message** “Lead us not into temptation....” Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet

**\*Hymn of Meditation** “Within the Maddening Maze of Things” #242 (red hymnal)

## **RESPONDING IN FAITH**

**Sharing Our Joys and Concerns with God and Each Other**

**Pastoral Prayer & The Lord’s Prayer....**

**Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.**

**Offertory** This Holy Feast -- C. B. Lysber

**\*Doxology No. 95 Blue** “Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow....”

**\*Prayer of Dedication**

**Service of Holy Communion** (see insert)

**\*Closing Hymn** “This Is My Song” #437 (blue hymnal)

**Benediction**

**Postlude** Solemn Lenten Meditation -- Theodore Du Bois (from the beautiful oratorio "Seven Last Words of Christ")

**Revised Common Lectionary Readings for Sunday, March 13, 2022**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent**

**Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Psalm 27; Philippians 3:17-4:1; Luke 13:31-35**

*“Each year, around the latter part of winter, Lent arrives. It nearly always surprises me. Here it is, once again, summoning me to change how I typically live.”*

**~ W. David O. Taylor, Professor of Theology & Culture, Fuller Theological Seminary**

**Especially we continue to hold in prayer our Ukrainian brothers and sisters.... And we continue to hold in prayer the family and friends of Kathleen’s nephew, Heath, and also the family and friends of Fred Bagnall and Muriel Pinkham.**

Please hold in your prayers all those affected by the coronavirus and the families of those who have died from the virus.... And all those families affected by the use of addictive drugs among their members....And all those dealing with the ravages of cancer near and far..... And all those affected, which should be every one of us, by the cruel condition of racism which continues to take the lives of too many of our Black brothers and sisters....And all those who have worked tirelessly for the building and rebuilding of our nation into one people, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.....And add a prayer for Tammy Whirty, a friend of Margie's, dealing with cancer challenges, and, from Jackie a request for prayers for Kyle Cloudier, continued prayers for Ursula recovering...and for "Cody," who doesn't live locally but needs prayers for guidance; Kristin Parker O'Neal, Jo Ann Parker's daughter, who has had brain surgery and is home now!; Enid, Ann Foster, Carol Moss, Julie Pollitt, Zeke Bryant, Helmut Steger, John Flaherty, BJ Thomson & family of Mimi's Uncle Doug, Heather Van Buskirk, and for Tiffany, Lucy's granddaughter.....

*Please feel free to contact Susan by phone (207)322-1948 or by email at [freerangepastor@gmail.com](mailto:freerangepastor@gmail.com) to have her add or drop any names from the prayer list AND to let her know if you would like for her to stop by for a visit sometime. She's always glad to have a chat with you!*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Sunday-3/13/22.....**Daylight Savings Time, Spring Forward**.....9:30 am: Worship Services

Suggested Food Pantry Donation.....Toilet Paper

Deacon for March, 2022: Galo J. Hernandez III

Reminders for next Sunday, 3/13/22

Greeter/Usher: Laci DeVarney

Coffee

Host:

Lector:

Claudia Rosti

Flowers:

Collection Total for Sunday, February 20, 2022: February 27, 2022

Pledges - \$1232.00

Pledges - \$ 60.00

Loose - \$ 132.00, of which \$100.00 is in

Loose - \$ 66.00, of which \$25.00 is

in memory of Muriel Pinkham.

memory of Fred Bagnall.

Sub Total - \$1364.00

Sub Total - \$126.00 **TOTAL - \$1490.00**

The 2022 weekly budgeted operating cost for the Church and parsonage is \$1623.00 per week.



**Federated Church of Thomaston  
United Church of Christ & United Methodist Church  
Together Since 1929**

***Sunday, March 6, 2022***

*“In a world so torn apart by rivalry, anger, and hatred,  
we have the privileged vocation to be living sign of a love  
that can bridge all divisions and heal all wounds.”*

✍ Henri Nouwen

**8 Hyler Street, Thomaston, Maine 04861 (207) 354-6105**

To contact the pastor via e-mail: [freerangepastor@gmail.com](mailto:freerangepastor@gmail.com)

WiFi password is #1Church

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<sup>[1]</sup>Donald K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*,  
Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996, p. 223.