

Sermon on Luke 4:1-13

Temptation, what images does the word conjure up for you? Most people today picture images about sex, power, drugs, and certain foods. But at its core, temptation is about people's insecurity and mistrust and that is what the devil preys upon. Here in church one of the first images that come to mind when we talk about temptation is Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden with God.

The serpent in the garden plays upon the insecurity of Adam and Eve by distorting what God has told them and they begin to mistrust God. "God doesn't want you to eat the fruit because then you'll be like God. So, what else hasn't God told you? What else is God keeping from you?" says the serpent to the two. With the sowing of that mistrust began the breakdown of the relationship between God and humanity, between Adam and Eve and then between them and all of creation.

The devil is still sowing mistrust. We see it again in today's gospel reading: you may go hungry, you do not have enough, and how do you know God is trustworthy? Jesus answers these questions with Scripture, not necessarily to get the devil to go away, but because it is these words that give voice to Jesus' trust. Jesus absolutely trusts in and is dependent upon God for his identity and future.

There is a crucial link between trust and temptation. When we can't trust that God will provide our daily needs, when we question what purpose God has for us, when we doubt that we are God's beloved child; then temptation takes hold and becomes very appealing to us. We believe the proposition that it is all up to

us; that God isn't able to provide and so we'd better take matters into our own hands.

I use act that way with my giving to church. When I was still working in the factory I was making a lot of money, but there would be many months that I was unable to give anything to church. Why? I couldn't trust that God would provide for my needs. Instead of taking the money I would give to church out of my paycheck first; I would take it out of whatever was left when I finished paying my bills. Most of the time there wasn't anything left because I left God for last.

When I left the factory and began working at the farmer's market, where I was making a lot less money, I realized that the only way I was going to make it was by trusting God to provide. So I began this practice. Whenever I receive a paycheck the first check that I write is what I'm giving to God. And you know what? I've always had enough to cover my needs and the amount of my giving has gone up. In fact I gave more to the church when I worked for less money than I did when I was making a lot!

But trust isn't something that happens over night, it needs to be practiced. I started out giving a little at a time and built up my giving as I could see just how much I could give and still have enough to live on. Trust like anything else is strengthened through practice. So today we're going to take the opportunity to strengthen our trust. Trust lies at the heart of our relationship with God and with one another. It isn't always easy and when we don't trust—temptation is waiting right outside our door. It takes the support of the whole community to grow in our

ability to trust and to live out of our abundance and courage, rather than scarcity and fear.

Right after his baptism Jesus is filled with the Holy Spirit and he returns filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. When we gather as a community of believers we can help one another remember our baptismal identity and be renewed by the Spirit.

You all should have received a piece of paper with your bulletins today. On one side I want you to write down one thing important that you feel confident about God's support; things that you still worry about but that you know God will be there. Label this side trust.

Now on the other side I want you to write down one thing that is difficult to trust God with right now. It can be a relationship, a job, school, work or home, an uncertain future. Label this side mistrust.

Now compare the two sides. Why is it easier to trust God with one of them and not the other? What makes the challenging one different? You can do one of two things with this card. Either take it with you and carry it with you for one week, taking a moment or two each day to pull it out to give thanks for what you are able to trust and to pray about the thing that you are having a hard time trusting God with. Or you can put it in the offering plate and I will pray about them. You don't have to put your names on them—God knows.