

**SERMON: "WHERE ARE YOU GOING FOR LENT? THE WILDERNESS"**

**TEXTS: OLD TESTAMENT PSALM 91:1-2, 9-16**  
**NEW TESTAMENT LUKE 4:1-13**

**March 9, 2025**  
**First Sunday in Lent**

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**INTRODUCTION**

There is a rhythm to our days, punctuated by seasons and special days, holidays  
And with almost all of those special days comes the question people ask,  
"Where are you going for ... Christmas? Easter? And so on  
What I have not yet heard is people asking, "Where are you going for Lent?"  
Why not? It is the one season more so than others we describe as a journey

This year, Johnny and I thought asking that question, about the Lenten journey,  
would be a good way to walk through the traditional lectionary passages  
We begin with the most traditional of them all, the story of Jesus' temptation  
The holy season of Lent always begins with a look at temptation

We can see why that might be. Lent is an intentional time, a time to consider  
what it means and what it takes to follow Jesus, follow him to the cross  
The journey imagery makes sense. So too the question we ask,  
with this series of sermons ... "Where are you going for Lent?"

The more I thought about this idea of travel, the more I thought about my own travels  
And, as you might guess, I ended up thinking about food. I remember places  
in many instances by what I ate there. The distinct flavors, the local fare.  
I know when I travel back South it's going to be barbecue, soul food  
and since I'm closer to the ocean, fresh seafood

With food on my mind, I started thinking about the traditional foods associated with  
all these special seasons. Anything come to mind, food wise, when you think  
about Lent? The pancakes on Fat Tuesday, no meat on Fridays for some  
I know a few restaurants in town that feature Lenten menus

Here is a menu offering I think we should make part of our Lenten traditions  
I think we need, especially for Lent (and especially these days) ... humble pie

The season of Lent begins with us being served the humility of Ash Wednesday  
when we are told "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return"  
And that is followed by the first Sunday of Lent and talk about temptation.  
It is not just a story about what happened to Jesus back when ... no,  
it is very much addressed to us and to our temptations now, in this wilderness.

Humble pie makes for a good first course. Don't come into this following Jesus thing  
thinking you've got it all figured out, "I'm good, thank you." Really?

## NOT A 3 POINT SERMON

This is how Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell the gospel story.

Jesus is baptized, and before he can do anything, any teaching or healing  
He is first tested, tempted in the wilderness. Sure seems like an intentional first step

**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 tested by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over he was famished.**

A serving of humble pie to start. Good enough for Jesus, good enough for us.  
Please notice Jesus did not stumble into the wilderness, or into temptation,  
by accident ... he was led by the Spirit. This is part of the plan, part of the journey  
Before we jump into the three temptations mentioned in these verses,  
we need to recognize this fact. Jesus starts here of all places ... on purpose

That is why I suggest humble pie makes for a good appetizer, an honest start  
For our part, we can't really hear the good news if we don't see the bad news  
If we don't see the bad news in the mirror. Honesty begets humility  
And humility is a good beginning to the journey of following Jesus

Looking then at these three temptations, let me name a temptation  
You know I'm a bit OCD ... and there are three temptations listed here  
It's just begging for a three-point sermon with some over-simplification  
and some alliteration. That's one temptation. Another is to make it about  
Jesus' temptation back then, keep the subject at arm's length and past tense

You know one staff member has to deal with my OCD ways more than the others  
Our custodian, Tim, dusts off my desk every so often – a desk with a few neat stacks  
(each has its place and purpose), plus pictures, a Ted Lasso mug, a Jewish dreidel,  
an LBJ paperweight and an army man as a reminder to pray for our troops.  
Tim takes them all off my desk to dust ... then puts them back in place

We've talked about it. He tells me he has a method for getting things back in place  
(everything in its place and a place for everything). He takes them off in an order  
This stack over there, that stack over there, LBJ with one stack,  
Ted Lasso with another. I appreciate the effort. But working on this sermon,  
I began to wonder if that is how I've preached this passage in the past.

Thinking about my own temptations, my sinfulness and shortcomings  
They do not fit neatly into a three-point outline or even into stacks on my desk  
Not do they fit into Jesus' past, or my past, or your past  
Temptation is not just about back when I was younger and stayed up later

Humble pie is a good appetizer. Also makes for a good entrée year after year  
week after week. I need this Sunday and this story. I need the Lenten journey.

## NO THANK YOU

The problem with three-point outlines and neat stacks is they help us over compartmentalize things, maybe pretend we've got things under control that temptation is an issue of another time and place ... or worse it is someone else's sin (would you look at them, their badness) Oh, my goodness, they are so very bad."

A little too easy to think that, isn't it? When I think that way, makes me think I ought to ask, 'Excuse me, do you have any humble pie on the menu? I think I might need a slice.'" And Jesus, ever the server, might look around the table and ask "anybody else need a slice of pie?"

The story of Jesus' temptation does seem to focus on how he uses his power. Might that be what we too need to hear in the hearing of these verses?

The first is about turning stone into bread. Got to admit, this one seems to be a good idea. Feed yourself. Feed others. I would have given in on the very first one. Would of seen it as rather innocent ... but then isn't that how temptation works? It markets itself as a good idea, even a righteous one Our sin isn't so much badness run amok, more like good gone off track

The next two temptations really show what the tempter is up to He's egging Jesus on to show his might, to use his power He does so with that almost game show temptation ... "all this could be yours" And he does so by testing Jesus, "if you are who you say you are, then"

It's like he's goading Jesus into being a show off That will be the case throughout Jesus' life and ministry People want to see and believe, "Show us." But we, the people do so expecting a certain kind of show, a spectacle, a show of power, maybe a military parade We don't really expect a servant leader, a humble, even suffering savior

But Jesus says 'no' to being a show off That is not how he uses his considerable power. Not to gain more power for himself (notice how often that happens how often the powerful seem to grasp for more and more power)

Jesus' "NO" to that use of power leads to a different kind of "YES" Look how he uses his power ... We'll find in his example a call to how we are to use our power. He will go on from this wilderness and talk about bringing good news to the poor and release to the captives he will heal the sick and reach out to the outsiders

That is what he will do, how Jesus will use his power He will use it for others, especially for those who have little to no power His "no" to the tempter will lead to a "yes" for and with others

## SUMMARY

I wonder if the humble pie served up here at the beginning of lent works like runners stocking up on carbs before a race. Or for those of us who aren't runners, is it like a cup of coffee, tea or Dr. Pepper ... a little jolt to push us forward along the journey of following Jesus using our time, talents, our power and position, as servant leaders?

You know, preaching on humble pie, I've realized a couple of things  
One is that I don't think it is a dessert – some sugary treat  
I think given the origin of the English language, it is more like how the Brits think about pie ... It is a main dish. Think a shepherd's pie.  
That makes me think humble pie ought to be a regular on the menu for us

And another, I've mentioned humble pie often in this sermon  
And I bet no one has gotten hungry thinking about a slice of humble pie  
Why is that? Could be that humble pie isn't well marketed. Bet they don't even have it at Village Inn, much less a poster of it next to a steaming cup of coffee

Another reason might also be that I have no idea what goes into a humble pie  
Thought about looking it up, researching the origin of the phrase seeing if I could actually find a recipe for humble pie. I can think of lots of celebrity chefs who might have reason to have that recipe. Speaking of marketing, be on the lookout for a recipe for humble pie from Martha and Snoop

Thought about doing that, then decided I like not knowing  
The ingredients in my humble pie are most likely somewhat different from yours  
Our temptations and our giving into those temptations vary  
I can't fit them all into a three-point alliterative outline  
Even Tim can't put them all back into the supposedly right stack

That being the case, and that is the case ... one practical piece of counsel  
When putting the ingredients of your pie together, please focus on your own pie  
Focusing on other people's humble pie (and their ingredients) ...  
Well, to stretch the analogy ... that's rather half-baked, isn't it?