**1 lent, Feb 17 2013, Deut 26: 1-11; Romans 10: 8-13; Luke 4: 1-13, The Rev. Mary Trainor**

Today's scripture readings present to us a multiplicity of views of......Wait a minute: TIME OUT! TIME OUT! Every once in awhile, we need to call time out, don’t we? In every type of team sports, there are crucial points – times when it’s necessary to call ”Time Out.” In a "time out" the team stops to 1) take stock of the situation, 2) to consider its options, and 3) to try to get back on the right path. In other words, “*How are we going to change what we’ve been doing in order to get back on track*?” Sometimes a TIME OUT is needed in our lives too: to STOP, take stock, consider our options, and try to get our lives back on the right path. We have just begun the church's season of Lent; **Lent is a “time out” in our lives.** It’s a time-out when we are called to reflect on our lives by self-examination, stripping away distractions and have added time for prayer and reading God’s Word. The ashes on Ash Wednesday symbolize repentance, which literally means to turn things around onto a new path -- away from what takes us away from God's way, and towards God, onto the right path. In this "time out" of Lent we have options. We can live our lives with no change. We are free to choose that option. Or maybe this Lent, this "time out," we will choose (with God's help) the option of the right path: moving closer to God. No matter how many years we have gone to church, there is much each of us can do to move closer to God. We get help with this in today’s Gospel, as we encounter Jesus and the Devil in the wilderness. All of us experience “the wilderness” at some point in our lives, which here symbolizes those times when we feel alone or weak.

In their conversation, two very different options for living are presented to us. The path the devil offers to Jesus (and to us) is very appealing: food, power, popularity. What is wrong with these? They seem innocent enough! The devil is cunning and clever! In our 21st century lives, the devil does not look like the familiar red cloaked, pitchfork holding creature from the movies and Halloween costumes -- the devil takes the form of whatever tempts each of us -- and that is different for us all. 1st Peter 5:8 tells us that, ***"Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."*** The wrong path is often taken by us taking little steps in the wrong direction, one step at a time, away from God. The temptations the devil presented to Jesus have one thing in common, and that is that they are about self-satisfaction: they all focus on “**you**” and not on “**God**.” In just FOUR sentences, the devil uses the word YOU 11 times. In our culture, the lure is worded differently -- "Oh just have a sip, oh just try it this one time." or “Go ahead, indulge yourself, YOU deserve it.” The devil says that life is all about YOU, our modern culture/media says the same thing -- and we fall for it. The devil says to Jesus, YOU want to be popular for doing amazing things: YOU turn stones into bread. He says, YOU must be **powerful, so** I will give YOU glory and authority. He says YOU must be **spectacular and command attention**. The satanic lure is that it’s all about YOU and you can have it all! God's way is different; Jesus said, "***Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.***" Pastor Rick Warren, who wrote *The Purpose Driven Life*, begins his book by saying,   "**It's not about you**." When we turn our focus to God and away from ourselves we begin to discover true joy and peace.

The Old Testament passage we read today outlines how the Israelites are to pay “***tribute”*** to God: they are to give the first fruits of their land to God. They bring their best early crops to the temple. Offering their first fruits to God reminded them to whom they owed their primary allegiance. In looking at your life, to whom do you give your primary allegiance? Who receives your “first fruits,” the best part of your time, your skills, and your goods?

One day, a boy and his father went to the zoo. They saw a huge lion, roaring and prowling around his enclosure. The boy screamed with fear, but the father remained calm. Why? The boy was scared because he only saw the lion; the father was not scared because he saw the cage enclosing the lion. The Christian's view of the devil is like the father's, not the boys; our enemy the devil is like the caged lion, and Jesus is the secure cage. At the end of today's Gospel story, the devil gave up and went away -- Jesus' power was greater. You needn't fear the devil, because you have Jesus.

The devil does exist, and awaits for us to become distracted and focused on ourselves. In 1513 German artist Albrecht Durer made an engraving (that now is in the Museum of Modern Art in New York) entitled, "The Knight, the Devil, and Death." In it, a gallant knight is riding his stallion down a path in the night. All along the sides of the path are monsters that obviously want to devour the knight, but they can't get to him because his eyes are focused sharply on his destination. Our focus, our destination is Christ; as long as we keep our eyes on Christ the devil has no power over us. St. Paul tells us in our Romans reading today that, "***The Word is near you***

***...everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*** When we sense evil in our midst or a weakening toward a temptation, we need to do one thing: call upon the name of the Lord: say the name of Jesus! If you wear a cross or keep on in your pocket, clutch that cross in your hand or hold it up. It is amazing how the evil or the temptation melts away if you do this. This is the path that Jesus offers, the path focused on God and not self.

Maybe the devil has told you –"**worry, be anxious, carry that burden on your shoulders."** But Jesus responds, “***Come to me, all of you who are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest***” and “***Cast all your cares on me.”*** Maybe the devil has tempted you: "**get as much as you can, you deserve it**" or "**just a little won't hurt**." Jesus responds, “***What does it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul?”*** and “***Love your neighbor as yourself***.” Maybe someone has hurt you and the devil is saying "**hold** **onto that anger, get the revenge you deserve**." Jesus answers: "***Forgive***...***revenge is mine.***"

You have one life to live, and you have a choice in how to lead it. In this Lenten season of your life's "time out," make the choice to keep your focus on God, adopt the new holy habit of focusing on Jesus more, calling upon Jesus more, trusting in Jesus more, listening to Jesus, reading Jesus' words in the Bible more.

Let us pray together today's Collect: **Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan; Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.**