

HAVEN LUTHERAN CHURCH
Hagerstown, Maryland



February 18, 2021



WHAT ABOUT THAT SOAP? I hope you were able to tune in for our Ash Wednesday service last night. In case you missed it and you are wondering why you have a bar of soap in your Lenten Travel Bag, let me share. More many, many centuries, ash was used to make soap. (Ash + water will yield lye). So, in this year in which we could not receive ashes, we use soap as both a sign of ashes and of the cleansing power of God's love and forgiveness.

I asked everyone to use the bar of soap to draw a cross on the mirror where they brush their teeth or wash their face each morning. Put the cross in the place where it will look like it is on your forehead when you look in the mirror. (If you have more than one person sharing the mirror, you will need to put one at the right height for each person.)

Then, when you look in the mirror and notice the cross on your forehead like it was traced there on your baptism, say "I am a baptized child of God, forever loved and forgiven." (I'm putting a sticky note on my mirror to help me remember the words.) Martin Luther suggested we "return to our baptism" each day to remember who we are and whose we are. Remembering we are a baptized child of God forever loved and forgiven, gives us the foundation, strength and encouragement to **be** God's child who brings God's light, love, healing and compassion into the world around us.



PSALM 51 AND SNOW Psalm 51 is traditionally used on Ash Wednesday since it seeks God's forgiveness. Did you notice verse 7? "*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*" So, I was thinking..... Let today's snow to be an "Amen" to our Lenten prayers or maybe God's blessing on our Lenten walk.

WORSHIP THIS SUNDAY 9:30 AM in the church and live stream on Haven's Facebook. Don't do Facebook? You can still get to it by going to our website (<http://havenlc.org>) and clicking the "f" icon you will see in the upper right corner of the home page). Stay safe. Stay warm. Come in the presence of our Lord and God's community at Haven this Sunday.

HAVEN ANNUAL MEETING ON ZOOM
FEBRURAY 28, 2021 10:30 AM

Again, we need a quorum of 50 to elect new Council members
(Can I lure you with a chance to win a bucket of ACT chicken or homemade dessert?)

Join Zoom Meeting on your computer click (or copy & paste in your browser)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89944487001?pwd=VnhkYm8xNXZTaE5CR0RzYjRVemM0QT09>

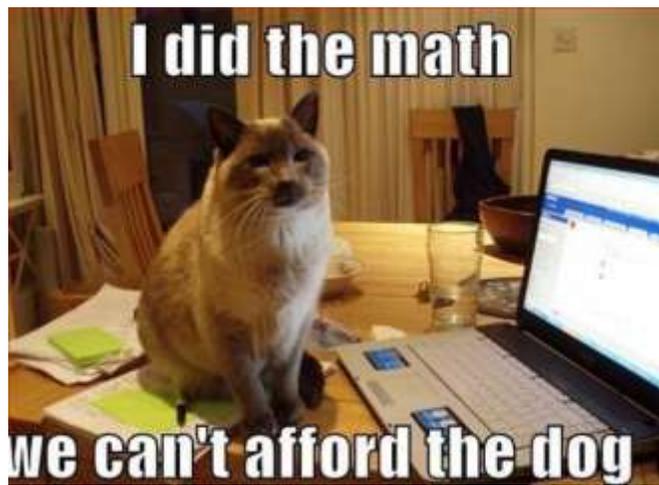
Meeting ID: 899 4448 7001 Passcode: 481006

Join ZOOM Meeting on your phone, dial +1 301 715 8592

Meeting ID: 899 4448 7001 Passcode: 481006

STRAWBERRY PICK-UP AT BOONSBORO HIGH I had offered to pick up strawberries for anyone else who had ordered them from Boonsboro High. I just got word that the pick-up day is next Wednesday, Feb. 24th, 3:30 -5:30 pm. If you need me to pick up your order, please send me an email (l.alessandri1035@gmail.com) or leave a message at church (301-733-5056)

BECAUSE WE NEED TO LAUGH



To everyone that
received a book from
me for christmas,
they're due back at
the library next friday.

Thank you.



A PAUSE IN GOD'S WORD

Read: Mark 1: 9-15

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

¹²And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

"Desert Voice- Jesus' Temptation in the Desert"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phiVW2ycgWU>

Reflection: *Today's devotion and prayer prepared by Rev. David Kaplan)*

Sometimes designated "Temptation Sunday," the first Sunday in Lent, in all three liturgical years, shares Gospel readings that describe Jesus' temptation in the wilderness by the evil one, variously referred to in the readings as Satan, the devil and the tempter. Perhaps you recall the familiar story: how the tempter appeals to a famished Jesus, fasting for forty days, to turn stones into loaves of bread; or to jump off the Temple spire to attract a huge following; or simply to bow down at Satan's feet for a brief moment to gain all the kingdoms of the world without any messy suffering on a cross. In each case Jesus resists with an appropriate word

from Scripture. In so doing he blesses his followers, who by ourselves continually succumb to temptation, with the power and the example to resist our adversary. The temptation accounts in Matthew and Luke are very similar; the most noticeable difference is the reversal of the last two temptations.

This Sunday's reading (above), however, is Mark's version of the story. Except it's not a story at all – it's a two verse summary. Only two verses? Two verses surrounded by a helpful context that allows us to place Jesus' temptation in the broader setting of the beginning of his public ministry: right after his baptism (which we celebrated six weeks ago) and before he began proclaiming the good news of God's Kingdom and calling disciples (which we heard four weeks ago). The sequence of those three events are more than a helpful time line; taken together they introduce us to the wonder and depth of God's saving work to be accomplished in Jesus. A perfect way to begin the Lenten season!

But the two verses themselves are significant, for they contain some phrases that are not found in the longer stories. In Matthew and Luke Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness; Mark more graphically declares, *And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness (literally, threw him out!).* The contrast is intentionally stark: the same Spirit who gently descended on him at Baptism suddenly hurled him into a place of conflict and struggle. The same Spirit continues to lead his people in both gentle and forceful ways into mission and ministry. I love the hymn "Spirit of Gentleness," but that title may be somewhat ironic. *You swept through the desert, you stung with the sand, and you goaded your people with a law and a land* sounds more like the driving, throwing out action of the Spirit than the gently descending dove!

Even more intriguing is the phrase *with the wild beasts*. What's that all about? At the surface level, it may simply be a statement of surroundings. Lions and bears – oh my! Although lions are extinct in the Holy land today, both lions and bears were present in Bible times. As were antelopes, jackals, wild dogs, mountain goats, hyenas, various kinds of raptors including owls, vultures, ravens and eagles. Some of them were undoubtedly part of the desert scene when Jesus was tempted. Their very mention, however, is a reminder that God's care for a fallen world extends beyond the pale of human sin to include all of creation. And that phrase is not the only reminder we have this Sunday. Today's first reading describes God's covenant with Noah after the flood (Genesis 9:8-17). The covenant is not only for Noah and his family and descendants, but includes *every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark* (9:10). Have you noticed in the Prayer of the Church each Sunday there's a petition for God's blessing on various parts of the created world? That prayer along with the Noah covenant and this little phrase from Mark's temptation summary remind us that from the very beginning God has appointed us as caregivers for the rest of creation. If Jesus' time with the beasts at temptation is worth noting, then our care for God's creative work is worth doing!

But the word here for wild beasts also has a more sinister meaning. In addition to flesh and blood animals it can also refer to demonic spiritual beasts. It's used with that meaning frequently in Revelation (chapter 13 especially) and also perhaps in 1 Corinthians 15:32. The desert area was considered the earthly haunt of such creatures, and Jesus' Spirit-driven presence in that setting is no coincidence. In fact, I believe it is at the heart of Mark's understanding of Jesus' testing, which was much more than refusing a series of appealing, but

seductive, offers from the evil one. *For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh*, St Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians (6:12), *but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places* (and maybe also for that moment in the Judean desert). With all those beasts raging against us, who possibly can stand victorious? The very one who was thrown into that situation for that purpose – to begin to reclaim humanity and all creation for the true authority, the Kingdom which endures forever. Of course, this was just the opening skirmish. The decisive battle lay ahead, down the road, at the end of our Lenten journey with him. With the victory in this desert struggle, however, the final outcome was certain.

In the meantime, angels would come to wait on him, to renew his strength so that he could wait on others. As Pastor noted in her sermon a few weeks ago, he would use that same word in declaring to his followers why he had come: *For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many* (10:45). In the meantime, with demonic beasts already in flight he would announce the breaking in of the true kingdom, *The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near*. Lent is just such a time for us as we turn to God again and believe in the good news that Jesus came to bring, that Jesus came to be. In the meantime, Jesus would continue to expel vestiges of the demonic beasts that crippled God's people as he cast out demons of blindness, deafness, epilepsy, misunderstanding, greed, despair and even death itself. In fact he continues to do the same for his people today - even when those beasts are microscopic in nature, and the exorcism comes in the form of a vial of vaccine for which we give thanks! And one more word to be aware of: the word Mark most frequently uses for Jesus' casting out demons is exactly the word that he used to describe the Holy Spirit driving out Jesus into the wilderness. Driven out into the wilderness, so that he could drive out evil beasts and principalities and powers, our tempted but triumphant Lord is ushering in a Kingdom where wolves and lambs will dwell together, and a little child shall lead them, and all creation will give praise and thanks to God.

Prayer: Lord God, as we begin another Lenten season, we thank you for the healing and renewal you bring to broken bodies and spirits and hearts, as well as your concern for all creation. Through Jesus' struggle and victory over all hostile powers that would pull us away from you, help us to use this season as a time for denying self; turning around to receive your mercy, grace and forgiveness; and sharing your love and care with one another and a world in need. In Jesus' name, **Amen**.

Hymns:

Pastor Kaplan's suggestions:

O Lord throughout These Forty Days (ELW 319)

(different tune than ELW) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2S1DJoNOk9A>

Eternal Lord of Love, Behold Your Church (ELW 321)

(a quintet) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFhpA082XU>

(Organ solo) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rG3W5IjH-w>

Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow (ELW 327)

(Organ) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jF69-20> GTU

(anthem - different tune) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsiW_r9hRuU

Let All Things Now Living (*ELW 881*)

(*acapella, youth choir*) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpMCE1G3N7Q>

(*organ and choir*) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSRO1cMb_70

As Your Spirit in the Desert (*ACS 923*) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYfAbUmU9Tc>

Other Suggestions

"The God Who Sees" (This is so lovely!) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sz81dIfwf4Y>

(some more desert stories in a modern oratorio telling the stories of Hagar, Ruth, David, and Mary and the promises God made to them.)

"Lord, I Need you" (Matt Maher)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e37m3I5eH8g&list=PLBxunSRZWbKbxu6PQdwl-gWhL1J3MtId2>

"Desert Song" (Hillsong) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3l1z7bXY9Y>