

**Lent # 1**  
**Trinity UMC**  
**Come to the Waters: Call to Repent**  
**February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Deuteronomy 26: 4-9**

*The priest will take the basket from you and place it before the Lord your God's altar. Then you should solemnly state before the Lord your God:*

*"My father was a starving Aramean. He went down to Egypt, living as an immigrant there with few family members, but that is where he became a great nation, mighty and numerous.<sup>6</sup> The Egyptians treated us terribly, oppressing us and forcing hard labor on us.<sup>7</sup> So we cried out for help to the Lord, our ancestors' God. The Lord heard our call. God saw our misery, our trouble, and our oppression.<sup>8</sup> The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, with awesome power, and with signs and wonders.<sup>9</sup> He brought us to this place and gave us this land—a land full of milk and honey.<sup>10</sup> So now I am bringing the early produce of the fertile ground that you, Lord, have given me."*

**Luke 4: 1-13**

*Now Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wild. For forty wilderness days and nights he was tested by the Devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when the time was up he was hungry.*

<sup>3</sup> *The Devil, playing on his hunger, gave the first test: "Since you're God's Son, command this stone to turn into a loaf of bread."*

<sup>4</sup> *Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy: "It takes more than bread to really live."*

<sup>5-7</sup> *For the second test he led him up and spread out all the kingdoms of the earth on display at once. Then the Devil said, "They're yours in all their splendor to serve your pleasure. I'm in charge of them all and can turn them over to whomever I wish. Worship me and they're yours, the whole works."*

<sup>8</sup> *Jesus refused, again backing his refusal with Deuteronomy: "Worship the Lord your God and only the Lord your God. Serve him with absolute single-heartedness."*

<sup>9-11</sup> *For the third test the Devil took him to Jerusalem and put him on top of the Temple. He said, "If you are God's Son, jump. It's written, isn't it, that 'he has placed you in the care of angels to protect you; they will catch you; you won't so much as stub your toe on a stone?'"*

<sup>12</sup> *"Yes," said Jesus, "and it's also written, 'Don't you dare tempt the Lord your God.'"*

<sup>13</sup> *That completed the testing. The Devil retreated temporarily, lying in wait for another opportunity.*

**Prayer**

Who are you? Who are we as a congregation- as a community of faith? What are the words we use to describe who we are? Take a

moment to think about how you introduce yourself to others. Does it change based on the context?

Go back to your beginning- to your birth. My parents named me Roberta Diane Jantzi. In these past 58 years of life, I have had nicknames, I have added another last name but my identity still flows from that name. My name says something about my parents also--- I had two older brothers but I am the one who was named after my father Robert.

Several weeks ago at my first cousin's funeral, I found myself still introducing myself to some people—I am the daughter of Bob and Doris—even though they have both been deceased for many years.

So throughout my life, an essential part of my identity has come from my relationship---I am the daughter of... I am also the sister of... the niece of...the aunt of...the cousin of... the wife of...the mother of... the pastor of... etc. Who are you?

Our relationships to others are certainly not the only factor of our who we are. We also define ourselves by what it is we do—we are retired, we are teachers, we are musicians, we are property managers, we are salespeople, we are students, we are seekers of truth, we are followers of Jesus Christ, we are United Methodist, we are conservative, we are progressive, we are democrat, we are republican, we are

independent...etc. Our identity is formed and re-formed throughout our lives.

Both of our scripture readings this morning focus on formation of identity, not as individuals but as an entire people. The story from Deuteronomy is the story of a people formed from a “wandering/ starving Aramean—Abraham—who went to Egypt where they became a great nation. The story continues with the exodus when God saw their ministry and brought them out of Egypt. This is the story that defines the Jewish people- a story that is told over and over again. A saving story of liberation that brings clarity and a communal identity.

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus enters the wilderness after his baptism for 40 days of wandering--- The Israelites wandered for 40 days after being liberated and Luke and the other gospels tell us that Jesus spent 40 days in a wild place- the wilderness, without food or companions. It is in this wilderness, as a vulnerable human that Jesus encounters the devil- or Satan.

Jesus is tempted in this wild place by ‘Satan—the devil’. *“however or whatever or whomever we imagine Satan to be- whether physical incarnation or mental apparition- this adversary is anything and everything*

*in our lives that rejoices in deception, seeks to destroy the good, craves ultimate control.”<sup>1</sup>*

*The temptations that the devil presents are aimed at the heart of Jesus’ identity. Twice (vv. 3,9) the devil begins his temptation by **calling into question Jesus’ identity as the Son of God with the words “if you are the Son of God”** followed by a challenge to prove this identity with some miraculous display (stone into bread (v. 3); a dramatic angelic rescue from death (vv. 9-11)).<sup>2</sup>*

Jesus is sure and strong in his core identity—he knows who he and to whom he belongs. He is the anointed one- the son of God who will bring salvation—liberation to his people.

Karoline Lewis writes that: *It is worth remembering that in the families of the ancient world an adult son was often understood as the father’s representative and the father and the son would work together to accomplish the family goals. The son’s identity, honor, and status is rooted in his family’s honor and status. Jesus does not need to gain these things by giving in to the devil’s temptations.*

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<sup>1</sup> Kayla McClurg. Temptation as Gift. Inward/Outward. 2-14-16 blog

<sup>2</sup> Karoline Lewis. Working Preacher website. 2-14-16

Throughout this season of Lent—we are focusing on our identity that is formed in the waters of baptism. We are invited to Come to the waters and claim our baptismal identity.

At a lecture by Rabbi Zaslow on Monday evening, a few of us from Trinity learned that in the Jewish tradition of the first century, water was used over and over again to mark a new beginning- a turning towards God. When we read of John at the Jordan river, he is John the Baptizer—not John the Baptist—according to Rabbi Zaslow because baptism was a common ritual that marked a cleansing, a returning, a commitment to turn away from human mistakes and turn toward the way of following God's commandments.

John the baptizer at the river Jordan is calling for people to repent—to turn back towards God. That is the essence of the call to repent—it means to turn. To turn away from the 'devil'- those things that call us to forget who we are and whose we are.

To turn away from striving to be in control and turn towards surrender to God.

To turn away from deceit and turn towards vulnerable truth.

To turn away from exclusiveness and turn towards an openness to welcome all.

To turn away from that powers of sin and death and towards the freedom and power given by God to resist evil, injustice and oppression.

The season of lent is a season of turning—the earth is turning towards spring- towards new life, towards a warming. We too as a people need a time of turning- a time to be once again re-formed not just as individuals but as a people who follow in the way of Jesus in community.

This Lent we are turning towards our baptismal vows and covenant. Here these words as we reaffirm our baptismal covenant. We begin our life of faith in the baptismal waters where we are claimed as God's beloved children. We walk in the way of Jesus, preaching good news, offering healing and hope to a broken world. We follow Jesus to the foot of the cross refusing the powers of evil. We follow Jesus the Christ beyond the cross, to the empty tomb of resurrection and a new way of life. This is not a linear path of faith but more of a spiral in which we are formed and re-formed over and over again. In the words of John Wesley, we are on the sanctifying grace—the path of holiness/ wholeness where we are invited to turn and re-turn to the way of Jesus over and over.

Let us hear the words of our baptismal covenant:

*Sisters and brothers in Christ: through the sacrament of baptism  
God's Spirit has been poured out upon the water,  
Water poured over and immersing us,  
Water that flows freely for all who will receive it,*

*Water from the streams of God's saving power and justice,  
Water that brings hope to all who thirst for righteousness,  
Water that refreshes life, nurtures growth, and offers new birth.*

*Today we come to the waters, to renew our commitments in each other's presence to Christ who has raised us, the Spirit who has birthed us, and the Creator who is making all things new.*

### **Renunciation of Sin**

Will you turn away from the powers of sin and death?

**We renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of our sin!**

Will you let the Spirit use you as prophets to the powers that be?

**We accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, in justice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves!**

Will you proclaim the good news and live as disciples of Jesus Christ, his body on earth?

**We confess Jesus Christ as Savior, put our whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as our Lord, in union with the church which Christ has opened to all ages, nations and races.**

My friends, I ask again...Who are we?

We are all claimed as God's beloved in the waters of baptism.

Who are we? We are followers of Jesus the Christ

Who are we? We are Water washed and Spirit Born

Thanks be to God.