

Prioritising God.

Sunday 5th March 2017

Genesis 2:15-17 and 3:1-7; Matthew 4:1-11

Deut. 8:3; Deut. 6:16; Phil 7:2; Luke 4:18.

Today we have two stories with a lot in common.

Both are set outdoors, both involve temptation, both are key points in the history of the world, one at the beginning, the Genesis of the world, one at the turning point, the point at which the self inflicted downward decline of humanity is halted and the wonder of a new Kingdom starts to emerge. And both have something to say to us about our priorities. Lent is a time when we think about our priorities, maybe by giving something up, or by taking something up. Which ever we do it encourages us to make a conscious decision and effort to change our priorities.

A businessman who worked very long hours arrived home one evening to find his 7 year old son waiting for him at the door. "Daddy?"

"Yeah?" replied the man.

"Daddy, how much money do you make an hour?"

"Well son, I don't really think that's any business of yours" the man said.

"Please daddy, please tell me, how much do you make an hour?" pleaded the little boy.

"If I tell you, you must promise you won't tell anybody else"

"I promise" said the little boy.

"Alright then" said his father. "I make \$150.00 an hour."

"Oh," the little boy replied. He looked a little sad, then said "Daddy, may I borrow \$20.00 please?"

His father was furious. "If the only reason you wanted to know how much money I make is so you can borrow some you can go straight off to bed!"

The little boy burst into tears and made his way to his room. After an hour or so the father had calmed down and went to his son's room. "I'm sorry for being so hard on you earlier son. If you tell me what you wanted the \$20 for and it's a worthwhile thing I'll think about giving it to you."

The little boy ran across the room to his piggy bank and counted out all its contents, exactly \$130.00.

"\$130.00, that's a lot of money son. Surely that's enough for what you wanted to buy" said the father.

"Well with the \$20 you'll give me it will be" the little boy replied. "I'd like to buy an hour of your time."

Sometimes we get our priorities wrong!

Adam and Eve, got their priorities wrong, humanity has a propensity to get it's priorities wrong.

When they eat the fruit they have been tricked, tricked into a belief that that they can know like God knows, that they can be all that God is. Their decision to disobey God and to follow their desire for more than God has offered, trips them up and they fall.

There has been a lot debate about who or what the snake/serpent represents. Scholars don't agree, however they do seem to agree that it is an anti God symbol. It represents the opposite of God's will, God's sovereignty, Gods power etc. Adam and Eve chose the anti God. Adam and Eve fell for it. Eve stops listening to the instruction of God and listens to the serpent, Adam listens to Eve instead of God. Adam and Eve have got their prioritises wrong. God is no longer the highest priority in their life. They instead go for greed, glamour and power. And the rest, as they say is history.

Jesus, Matthew points out, is empowered by the Holy Spirit as he enters the wilderness. The wilderness was to first century readers a spooky and dangerous place, inhabited by wild beasts especially poisonous snakes. So here is Jesus, empowered by the Spirit, in a place where one bite from a snake can bring certain death.

The tempter speaks to Jesus. The words of the tempter to Jesus are often translated as 'if you are the Son of God then turn this stone, etc.'

A more accurate translation would be 'Because you are the Son of God...'

Jesus, fully human and fully divine is in the wilderness, in a place of danger and the tempter is saying because of your divinity do this. He is saying become less human, empty yourself of your humanity and show me who you really are.

Jesus is having none of it. Jesus' reply quoting Deut 8:3 'One does not live by bread alone' highlights that God gives us all we need to sustain us. Its not that God can not do this. We know that God does indeed provide bread for the Israelites and for the 5000. He does it because the Kingdom is not the tempters priority,

The tempter once again reminds Jesus (as if he needed reminding) that he is the Son of God and that because he is the son of God he jump and be saved. The tempter even sites Ps 91:11-12 responding to Jesus' last retort which relied on scripture. The devil uses scripture to justify his request of Jesus. Jesus goes back to the book of Deut to 6:16 and says 'do not put the Lord your God to the test. It is not that God can't, it because the Kingdom is not the tempters priority.

When the devil offers Jesus all the Kingdoms of the world this would have included all those kingdoms that had and still did oppose and oppress Israel. To bow down and worship satan would mean Jesus gives satan priority in his own life.

Jesus empowered by the Holy Spirit resists the tempter. This is not a story of will power. Yes Jesus would have won the battle of wills, this is a story about us. Jesus in his full humanity hid, or emptied himself of his divinity (Phil 7:2) and empowered by the Holy Spirit resisted greed, glamour and power.

Thankfully in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus we see a mammoth shift of priorities. We see a shift from stability and conformity to radical non conformity. Matthews account of the temptation of Jesus demonstrates the radical non conforming nature of the Messiah. This is not just a story about how amazing Jesus was and is, it is about how amazing we can be. Empowered by the holy spirit we say no to the anti God ways of the world that felled Adam and Eve and say yes to the radical non conformity of Christ.

As we go through this season of Lent what ever we have given up or taken up lets remember that we are doing it to remind us of our priorities.

When we give God priority in our lives we enter into the radical non conforming ways of Christ; Christ who in his full humanity reversed the actions of Adam and Eve. The radical non conformity of Christ, we are told in Luke 4:18, will 'bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, recovery of site to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the year of the Lord favour.'

it means we give more to the poor, we find ways to help them out of poverty, we advocate for them and we pray for them every time we see them or hear about them. It means we house those who are trapped in homelessness because the system is unjust and unfair. it actually means we see the sight of the blind restored.

Story of blind healing.

He believes in us so much that we are entrusted with making the Kingdom of God here on earth as it is in heaven. Through God, through him and the in the power of the holy spirit we are are called to bear the Image of God, to make him recognisable throughout the world. To show the world that he is merciful, loving, kind, and slow to anger.

When we, filled with the spirit of God go into the places we live, work, rest, play, eat, walk, worship then we undo the effects of the fall, the effects of our disobedience and our desire to be masters of our own destiny and we are part of the process of a new creation, we are play our part in the reign of God.

Bullets

Prayer

- Two stories
- Outdoors, temptations, key points, beginning, turning point
- self inflicted downward decline of humanity is halted and the wonder of a new Kingdom starts to emerge.
- Priorities - Lent give up or take on - its about Priorities.

- Story of dad and Child
- Sometimes we get our priorities wrong

- Adam and Eve, and we get priorities wrong.
- Tricked into thinking they can be like God, disobey and follow their own desire - trips them up and they fall.
- Snake = anti God - they fall for it and the anti God ways of life.
- Instead of listening to God, listen to Snake, listen to Eve

God is no longer the highest priority in their life. They instead go for greed, glamour and power. And the rest, as they say is history.

- Empowered, wilderness, snake death
- If you or Because you
- Full human, fully divine - tempter is asking Jesus to be less human. I was humanity that are guilty of the fall and in Jesus humanity we we see the fall reversed.
- Bread, Jump, Kingdoms take your priorities away from God.

- J empowered by HS in full humanity resists the tempter. J in full humanity hid his divinity (Phil 7:2)
- Its important because it demonstrates what we can do too when we are empowered by the spirit.

- in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus we see a mammoth shift of priorities.
- Shift from stability and conformity to radical non conformity.
- Lent = priorities
- When we give God priority in our lives we enter into the radical non conforming ways of Christ;
- Luke 4:18, will 'bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the year of the Lord favour.'
- It means, the poor, homeless, addicts, lonely, blind
- Story about blind healing.
- we have been entrusted with making this radical non conforming way of life that we call the Kingdom of a reality on earth as it is in heaven.

When we, filled with the spirit of God go into the places we live, work, rest, play, eat, walk, worship then we undo the effects of the fall, the effects of our disobedience and our desire to be masters of our own destiny and we are part of the process of a new creation, we are play our part in the reign of God.