

Sermon – Year A Lent 1
 Tempting time
Genesis 2.15-17, 3.1-7; Psalm 32; Romans 5.12-19; Matthew 4.1-11

Have you ever given thought to the relationship between the words “temptation” and “temp” (as in “temporary” ... or “tempo” or “time”? Well, I never did until this week as I pored over our Gospel for today. Perhaps “time” was on my mind this week due to my wondering when we would be setting our clocks forward on Saturday evening for Daylight Savings Time. (The Saturday this year will be March 11.)

And, for the record, I could not find a relationship linguistically between the two words. I even asked a linguist friend of mine if he could research the word and our findings jibed.

Yet my heart tells me there is one.

I heard of an experiment with young children and marshmallows. These early elementary aged children were each given a marshmallow and told that if they saved their marshmallow for ten minutes they would receive a second one. The behaviors of the children, then, were observed for the next ten minutes. Some

couldn't wait. One little girl banged her head on the desk to keep herself from eating the marshmallow. Others waited patiently. The results of this study showed that those who were able to wait the ten minutes had a greater chance of finishing college ... and even greater chance for success in their lives. Those who were able to fill the time, using their imaginations could see those tempting little things as clouds ... could let their minds flow in all different directions while using the time productively and creatively. Yet some saw this as a frustration ... something to endure ... and not to be cherished.

Time and temptation. #

In essence, Lent is something like that. The more I thought about this concept, the more I became convinced that there is a relationship.

Here's how I see it ...

There are two types of time known in Greek. One is *kairos* - which is defined as God's time; and the other is *chronos* - defined as man's time. (It is the *chronos* that we will experience two

Sundays from now. This is the human's attempt to control time as we switch to Daylight Savings Time.)

“Temptations” are those things that happen to us along the way as we stride to and strive for Easter morning. (Our scripture this morning is all about what “sin” ... the act of giving in to those temptations. Yet, as I thought about them, they are actually “temporary”. They are those things that can trip us up; those things that appeal to our ego ... putting self first and separating us from God.

First, the devil offers Jesus popularity. Just think of all the people Jesus could feed if he turned stones to bread ... and feed himself in the process.

Second, Satan offers fame. The more that people could see what Jesus could do, the more he would receive recognition.

Third, he offers Jesus a kingdom. Jesus would have the whole world.

All tempting perhaps, but only temporary.

So, once again we are invited into this gift of time during Lent ... God's time – which is eternal. We have a choice. We can accept this or be tempted to live by human time ... which is both temporary and tempting. It takes effort ... a lot of effort and intentionality to observe this Holy Season of Lent. It takes discipline as we learn to become disciples striving to live into the Beloved Community.

Then I think back about the little girl who banged her head on the desk to avoid eating her marshmallow during what must have seemed like an eternity to her. I wonder in years past as I thought of Lent as that long, drawn out season when I was supposed to do something or give up something until Easter morn.

And then I think of the child who spent his or her time imagining all that marshmallow as a cloud ... occupying the time with possibilities.

I imagine Jesus, being tempted by the devil for forty days and nights. He not only saw the possibilities; he was controlled by

them and did not allow himself to be controlled by the temporary temporal “things” being offered by the devil.

Time changes all things. And time can heal all things.

Our purpose is not just to journey to Easter morning, but, to put ourselves wholly into this season of Lent. When we do, we can become changed persons by Easter morn and continue beyond.

There is a strong possibility that something within you will have changed by that day. There is a possibility that whatever your chosen discipline for this year will strengthen you to walk a little more assuredly in the footsteps of Jesus. There is a possibility of new life ... no matter what your age. We are called to be more *like* Jesus ... not Jesus himself.

You see, dear ones, it is all in how we choose to use our time and how we can use temptations as stepping stones, rather than stumbling blocks, for the next several weeks. Your faithfulness has compelled you to walk with Jesus through this time. You have chosen to do so. You know that he is with you ... and you are keenly aware that you are with him through these forty days.

In the words of The Rt. Rev. Deon Johnson, Bishop of Missouri, as he encourages us to consider the wilderness of Lent:

“Wilderness.

We need those times in the wilderness,
away from the norm,

where we are stripped bare
of the baggage and burdens we carry
in order to be formed and reformed
over and over again by God.

We need those times in the wilderness
to step out into the unknown,
to seek after God’s footprints in the sand,
to listen for God’s voice in the wind,
to be steeped in the fullness of God’s Spirit moving in, around, and
through us.”

And, along the way, what may have seemed an impossibility
may become a possibility. We need only remember our baptismal
vow that reminds us that “We *will* with God’s help” and we *will*
prevail because it is only with God’s help that we can!

In the praying words of Bishop Johnson:

“Holy God, meet us, transform us, remake us in the
wilderness. Amen.”