

Sermon for 6 March 2022, 1st Sunday of Lent (Rev Lin Vawer)

Luke 4: 1-13 Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness – *Jesus' identity, Our identity*

Today we are told such a lot about Jesus' identity. The previous chapter reads like ancestry.com – Jesus' human identity is traced right back to Adam and is contrasted with his baptism when the voice from heaven declares "this is my son, the beloved". Jesus is both divine and human, fully God and fully man. Jesus is led from that declaration of love into the wilderness where he is confronted with real questions and temptations about using power to gain instant results. However, he uses Scripture as a reminder of God's bigger story and a guide as to how to respond.

His responses tell us even more about his identity, helpful as we think of our identity as people of God.

We are more than material beings –

The first temptation, when Jesus is really hungry and is designed to instil doubt.

"**IF** you are the son of God have something to eat." Please yourself. Suit yourself. And Jesus reply is instructive when we look at our identity

"**it is written** Man shall not live on bread alone."

Our identity is spiritual, and it takes more than bread to really live. stuff alone does not fulfil us. We are more than the sum of our body and our bodily needs.

To be fully human, the satisfaction of our material need is not enough. It's easy to become materially bloated and spiritually stick like. When we deny the spiritual and become focused on the physical, we become captive to greed, concerned only with fulfilling what our bodies want, its distorts our identity and limits our fullness of life.

Our identity lies in the material and the spiritual

God is at the centre –

The second temptation, appeals to the desire for power and authority.

"**I will give you** authority and splendour – just worship me"

The temptation lies in the thought - the sub text: " just think of all the good you could do"

Jesus response pierces the heart of this temptation, which is to worship that which is not God.

"**it is written** worship the Lord your God and serve him only."

It's a summary of the first two commandments. Whatever it is – money, power, influence, - when we give ultimate value to something that is not God we become less than fully human. Idolatry in whatever form, distorts our true identity.

To be fully human we must acknowledge that "our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God". A human being fully alive is a person focussed on praise, reverence, and service of God. In the monastic orders, at a set time a bell rings and everything stops for prayer. The times of prayer allow the compass points of human hearts to come back and settle on true north. God comes first.

Trust God Implicitly

The third temptation, seeks to undermine trust in God with the lure of fame.

“IF you are the son of God ... jump”

Imagine the buzz of the crowd if Jesus were to do just that - the gasp of horror that turns to amazement as angels swoop in to save him.

Jesus sees right through it and names this temptation for what it is , a lure to putting God to a pointless test.

“It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’

He doesn't need to test God. He trusts God implicitly and it lies at the core of his identity.

To be fully human is to place our trust in God, we don't need to test him, to impress him or others. We just need to stay in relationship with him.

Most of us are not going to go off for 40 days alone with God but perhaps this lent we could do something differently and create spaces for God, quite moments focussed on God, with God and for God – allowing our trust to deepen as we journey to Easter.

Jesus' identity lies not in miracles, power or celebrity but in service – an open hand not a grasping fist.

Lent is a perfect time to remind ourselves of our true identity:

material – spiritual people, centred on God. Trusting in God.

Are we ready to be different this Lent?