

## Temptation

Today we hear Mark's account of Jesus' time in the wilderness, the time between his baptism and the start of his ministry. Mark only tells us that Jesus was in the wilderness 40 days; he was tempted by Satan; he was with the wild beasts: and the angels "waited," ministered to him.

Luke and Matthew go into much more detail, telling us about Satan's 3 temptations: for material wealth; for physical strength; for political power and authority. Since this is the first Sunday in Lent, and since this is a season of reflection, self-examination and a time to contemplate taking up the Cross, we can think through those temptations that challenge us. Are these temptations material, physical, the promise of power and control?

Lent is a time to consider our own wilderness experience. Where is the wilderness in our experience? When do we feel alone? When do we experience temptation? When, how does Satan come to us? When, how do the angels minister to us?

We certainly know many in Florida, suffering through the tragic school shooting last Wednesday, are in a kind of wilderness. They are being tested. Our entire nation is being tested to confront gun violence, mental health and school security issues. What needs to change? And we can be sure of two realities – the same realities Jesus knew in the wilderness, throughout his ministry and on the cross – Satan will try to use this tragedy to expand evil and to try to lead many away from God, away from love. But more importantly: Angels are surrounding, ministering to those suffering; God is there.

Two of my favorite books that deal with the reality of evil are: C.S. Lewis' The Screwtape Letters and Scott Peck's The People of the Lie. Lewis wrote his book during the dark days of World War II. Peck was an army psychiatrist during Vietnam who later went into private practice and became a Christian. His first book, The Road Less Travelled, published in 1978 sold over 10 million copies. The People of the Lie, came out in 1983. Peck based this book upon Jesus' words to the Jewish religious authorities, "You are from your father, the devil ... he is a liar and the father of lies ..." (John 8:44)

Lent is a time to confront evil; to face the reality of evil; to know Jesus defeats evil on the cross. So we use this holy season to go to our own wilderness places; to face temptation, to confront evil. No matter how difficult, how overwhelming the experience, we know the angels will minister to us; God will be with us; Jesus won the battle on the cross for us.