

1st Sunday in Lent

Gospel: Luke 4:1-13

What is the “Spirit-filled life?”

What does it mean to be “led by the Spirit”?

Some have said that these words are talking about a special level of the Christian life attained only by some. Others speak of people needing to have almost a second coming to repentance and trust in Jesus when God fills you with his Spirit. Is this right?

Did you notice how our gospel passage begins today?

In verse 1 of Luke chapter 4, Luke obviously picks up from chapter 3, where at his baptism by John in the river Jordan *“the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, saying: “You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”*”

With the Holy Spirit and the Father in full agreement, support and cooperation with him, we are told that Jesus begins his ministry down the path the Father has ordained for him. God reassures him he is the Son – the true king of all things and he has come to rule. God reassures him he is the servant whose death for our sins is well-pleasing to the Father.

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So it's important to note carefully that Luke tells us Jesus does not live in obedience to God apart from being filled with his Spirit. It's not that Jesus is deficient in some way in his ministry and needs an extra injection of energy or ability. It's that he is reassured at this point that the other two persons of the Trinity are thoroughly committed to him and his life as a human. He has the Father's word and is led/controlled – "filled"- with the Spirit.

Luke importantly tells us not once but twice that "Jesus is full of the Spirit" and that "Jesus, is led by the Spirit". This is what we would call the normal Christian life.

However, we will be a bit surprised to see what this means for Jesus. For it meant being tempted, tested, put to the test by the devil himself. No mention of spectacular behaviour, miraculous actions or stunning achievements. Rather, under pressure, it's the same issue as we face: will he obey his Father, God? Will he be true to the path God has laid out for him – for Jesus that path is as the King who suffers and dies to set his people free?

While Jesus is unique in his role, of course, his testing is something all his people are promised, expect, and experience. Every last one who follows Jesus knows this only too well. You and I know. Both for our Lord and us, the test is: "Will I trust God, or go my own way."

So, right at the beginning of his public ministry, filled with the Spirit of God for that ministry, he is led up from the River Jordan by the Spirit of God for 6 weeks and with nothing to eat he faces his great enemy.

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Did you pick up that the devil has no new tricks up his sleeve? His attempts to cause us to sin are always the same. Never original for he is not a creator, they are always second-hand. It's the same tactic from the Garden of Eden onwards: Trying to sow doubt in our minds about God and what God has said. Accusing God of being mean; of not delivering on his promises, of lying to us.

1st test: ³ The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

In other words: "You poor man – God has led you out here into the desert and now you're starving. He can't be trusted – that's obvious. He does help those who help themselves, you know. Change that rock into a loaf before you keel over and die."

And how does Jesus reply? ⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: *'Man does not live on bread alone.'*"

This Spirit-filled man understands the Bible, the word of God, in its completeness and sharply rebukes the devil for trying to undermine that word. For trying to readjust and so lie about God's goodness. God has not only given us material life – to be nourished by physical food which he supplies in abundance. He has given us spiritual life; life in unique relationship with himself, made us his living children. And that life is – surprise, surprise, created and sustained by God through speaking it.

2nd test: ⁵ The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷ So if you worship me, it will all be yours."

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How cunning! Jesus IS the Son, the King of all things. Everything belongs to him. He has come into this world to demonstrate this great fact. But at this point in history that is not yet clear. He is starving. He is in the desert with nothing. He has no assets or the trappings of a king. The devil says: Here is a way of making it clear to everyone!

But there's one flaw in the devil's offer. All the kingdoms of this world, all earthly power are NOT his to give away. Under God, he is allowed to have some influence in and through them.

But Jesus, the One who is filled with the Spirit of God speaks the truth:

⁸ Jesus answered, "It is written: *'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'*"

ONLY is the most important word in that response! God will not share his glory, his God-ness with another. There will come a time when the all the glory of Jesus will be seen, when he will come into his kingdom, the inheritance that is his. But it will be by obedience to the word of his Father, NOT any other way.

The devil tries again:

3rd test: "Jump!" "Jump off the highest building – God has made all these promises – let's see if he means them."

Response? ¹² Jesus answered, "It says: *'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'*"

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We are here today because Jesus was tested by the devil. Tested not to trust God. Tested even to death, and yet never stopped trusting God. His perfect obedience to the Father's will and the Spirit's leading worked out our salvation.

All who belong to Jesus – I hope that's all of you (!) – likewise are filled with the Spirit so we may keep trusting God and living that new life purchased for us by Jesus' perfect obedience.

Like Jesus, we are filled and led by the Spirit so we may do what by nature we cannot do – walk in obedience to our heavenly Father. Live like Jesus. Trust like Jesus. Obey like Jesus.