

The Rock 01-03-2020

Core Value: Bible is our guidebook for living.

First reading: 2 Peter 1:16-21

Title: Why the Bible?

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:10-17

Theme:

The best way for the follower of Jesus to be best equipped for life's challenges, for our desert moments, is to know the Bible, to commit it to memory, and to be walking in community with others.

Introduction:

As we begin a new year here on this first Sunday of 2021, I think it's always good to look back over the previous year to see what we have accomplished.

2020 however, is probably a year we would all rather forget. I'm just not sure that's the best way to go about life. There was a great deal we learned, grew through, and accomplished.

Assessing our circumstances and situation in light of the Bible, I find, is most helpful and very settling. Paul, I am sure, felt the same way.

At the end of all things for him, we find in what is probably one of the last letters he ever wrote, where his execution loomed closer on the horizon than one would prefer, he takes the time to continue teaching.

Not only teaching Timothy, but reminding him where to go to get his strength, stability, security as well as his marching orders for life.

Yes, and all while he is in prison awaiting his "punishment".

There is a lesson here, and it's a core value for me. That is this: **The Bible is my guidebook for life.** It is what brings everything together and makes sense of life itself.

I look to the Bible, as we all should, not just so we can know what is good to do and what is bad to do, but most importantly, to find Jesus and be conformed to Him.

To see God's story in the people of Israel and ultimately see our story in light of theirs.

The Story:

I want us to look this first Sunday of the year, at the very beginning of

Jesus's ministry and an incident that happened.

It focuses on a few things, not least of which is the importance of knowing our Bible but also how to apply it correctly

That story is found in Luke 4:

"And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone.'" And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'"

And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw

yourself down from here, for it is written,

“‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ and “‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

And Jesus answered him, “It is said, You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.” And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.”

-Luke 4:1-13 ESV

In what is called “The Temptation of Jesus”, we see the devil at work trying to get Jesus to do things his own way.

Never one to be too creative, he is tempting Jesus in the same way he did Adam and Eve. And what we see here in one sense is this:

- 1- The devil knew and used the word of God to try and manipulate and advance his worldly agenda.
- 2- He seems to focus on weakness, and tries to use that to drive a wedge between Jesus and the Father. Trying to get Jesus to do things in a way that serves Himself and not God’s plan.

It's a perfect situation actually for the devil to do this. Here Jesus is in the desert, a stark, lonely and barren place.

Let's understand that while the challenge to Jesus came in the desert place, the desert is not a bad place to find yourself, provided it is God ordained.

In fact, it tends to be the place in our lives where we have the potential to learn the most. And it is the place where we are challenged the most.

It is however, also where the enemy shows up and begins to poke around the edges of our weaknesses to see if he can entice us to go down roads we shouldn't.

It's interesting to see here that Jesus did nothing to defend himself that is outside of our ability to defend ourselves. That is an important observation for us.

In other words, we have at our disposal the authority and the means to withstand the attacks of the enemy, just as Jesus did.

The devil, notice, doesn't go nuclear on Jesus, or try to create something new to trip Him up. In fact, he uses the very words of God to try and trip him up.

Misuse, misquote, and manipulation of God's word -are all ways in which the enemy uses the Scriptures to entice believers.

He also de-values it, causes it to be called into question by the very people who claim to believe it.

The truth is that the Bible is our guidebook. It is our all-sufficient source for instruction and truth. But if Satan can introduce doubt, we are in trouble.

Both Paul and Peter make this point clear in both of our opening readings. It shouldn't be any surprise to us then that the devil would start there as well in trying to tempt God's people.

Paul in instructing Timothy, not only emphasizes the importance of mentoring, discipleship and the importance of community -He emphasizes the centrality of the Scriptures (the Bible) to all of that:

"You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra-which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. **But as for you**, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

-2 Timothy 3:10-17 ESV

Peter as well, when he addresses the Church as a whole, encourages them that what they believe is no fairy tale:

"For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the

prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

-2 Peter 1:16-21 ESV

The fancy wording for this is called "The dual-authorship of Scripture".

What that means is that 100% of man wrote what was written. Ex: It is Peter writing his letter. He is not in some kind of weird trace out of control of himself as he lets the pen walk across the page.

And yet -it is also 100% the Holy Spirit who is moving him to write what he writes.

It's very important to understand this as we look at the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Why? Because the very identity of the People of Israel is encapsulated IN THE WORD OF GOD.

So, if these verses in Luke 4 seem to echo or mirror another event, that's good, because they do.

The people of Israel were given their **freedom** in that great Exodus from Egypt. God brought them from there to Mount Horeb and gave them the Law (His word).

This was their instruction for how to live. That marked them out as His people. In other words, He gave them their new **identity**. They belonged to Him.

He then sent them out on **mission** to go and take the Promised Land. And anyone who has read that story knows that it didn't go well for them.

The first go round failed and they found themselves wandering in the desert for 40 years. Because they didn't trust God's word.

Jesus, here in Luke, in a micro-cosmic way is re-living that Exodus (the desert experience) and while he is tempted in every way, as we are:

Sustenance-Power-Protection

He does not sin.

- 1- Sustenance: The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." -**Luke 4:3 ESV**

The devil challenges Jesus in His weak spot:

"And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry."

-Luke 4:1-2 ESV

A lot of times we think the devil is going to come at us head on. Now, while he is not the brightest -mostly due to arrogance and pride, he's not stupid either.

Where are you most vulnerable? Think on that. Even if it is a good thing. It doesn't need to be something that is overtly bad. That is the place where he will hit you.

And subtly. What does he do with Jesus? He uses the Scriptures. You are the Son of God! You can do anything. Yes, yes, I am but...

"And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone. '"

-Luke 4:4 ESV

It is written. Where? Deuteronomy that's where:

"And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not

know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."

-Deuteronomy 8:3 ESV

When that doesn't work, he targets another one of our weaknesses, power and control:

"And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

-Luke 4:5-7 ESV

The ability to think that we are masters of our own destiny, that we can run things, control things and have "the power", is part of our problem.

Didn't work for Adam and Eve, and frankly it hasn't worked for anyone since. But we have to see past our pride and arrogance here though.

God, in His word, told Adam and Eve, "I am freely giving you everything, except one tree."

"And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so."

-Genesis 1:28-30 ESV

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

-Genesis 2:15-17 ESV

What did they want? The ONE THING. Pride. We know what is best for us, and that is where the devil tempts Jesus, just as he did with Adam and Eve.

But Jesus, who already owns everything - GAVE IT ALL UP- to be with and like us, is offered everything on his terms. We find Him answering that temptation the way Adam and Eve should have:

"It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve. '"

-Luke 4:8 ESV

Again, Deuteronomy:

"It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear."

-Deuteronomy 6:13 ESV

When that doesn't work either, the devil decides to play a game of chicken with Jesus to see if He will fail to trust God's protection:

"And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

-Luke 4:9-11 ESV

Notice that he uses Jesus's own words against him. "**It is written**". You want to go that route, so will I. The Bible says this Jesus. How are you gonna respond to that?

This is why you need to know THE BOOK! For this very reason. Something can be a truth statement right from the Bible -but out of context, and applied in an inappropriate way, it will actually violate the very Scripture being quoted.

"Oh, this looks great -All I need to do is have faith, trust God and I can fly!"

No. no you can't! Why? Because God, in His creation has another immutable Law, and it's called gravity.

Can God save you from your foolishness? Every day and more times than I can count. But Jesus knows the game here.

What's really being said is that God serves YOU. He is at YOUR beck and call, and He obeys YOUR commands and desires. His very word ought to conform to you, so that He now has to give you what you want, as though you are now God..

No, He does not. He is God, and we are not. And Jesus the man, responds in the way we all can, should AND have the capacity to do:

"And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

-Luke 4:12 ESV

Jesus knew His Bible, which made Him everything that Paul the Apostle teaches us we can be.

Application:

A church that circles itself around the Bible, makes it the focus and center piece for authority, teaching and instruction, will be a healthy church.

Jesus didn't get there by five minutes a day. Although, if you do not have a good and formed habit of Bible reading -START THERE.

I want to give you a few things to think on as we start 2021 here at The Rock:

- 1- As Christians we ought to be thirsty for more. Been there, done that, I know the ending, is not a place we should ever be. "Live up to what you have already attained", says Paul. But don't stay there.

We are to be life-long learners as we seek to glorify God, and He seeks to conform us to Jesus.

- 2- Remember, it's not a bad thing to be in a desert place. Especially if God puts you there. Growth, refinement, self-reflection and assessment will happen there if you ask God what He is doing and how it is you can join Him.
- 3- It is in these moments where He is preparing us for what is next. And our faith and trust is made more sure, the more we know His word, trust in that instruction we find in the Bible, and the more we store it in our DNA.

There will be a link to a podcast to one of the most popular and useful reading plans. Robert Murry M'Cheyne maps out a reading plan that allows us to read through the Bible each year.

If you don't have a reading plan, this is a great resource. Also, if you don't have a Bible, we want to provide you one. Just contact the office.

What a great way to start the year, by forming good habits that will carry us through all the ups and downs of life.

