

Sermon: Are you famished? Luke 4:1-13 March 9<sup>th</sup> Lent 1.

Prayer: Gracious God, lead us not into temptation. Give us strength to resist evil. Let your Word be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Amen

**Introduction:** Beginning on Ash Wednesday is the season Lent on the Liturgical Calendar of the church. Christians around the world are on the journey called Lent. Communities of faith will engage the disciplines of almsgiving, prayers, reading scripture, fasting and self-denial. It is a time of renewal, reflection and repentance, drawing us closer to God. (The word Lent has its roots in the Anglo-Saxon word *Lencten* which means "Spring" the time when the days are lengthening).

Lent changes the rhythm of our lives and gives new meaning as we welcome the spring and Easter seasons. Whether we pause to put ashes on our forehead, washed hands or feet in worship, read scriptures and offer prayers, Lent will find us. The whole story of being a follower of Jesus involves human suffering, death and resurrection. Jesus death on the cross and resurrection is to save the world.

*What are you giving up for Lent? What kind of self-denial you will do?* Some people give up smoking, alcohol, movies, cell phones, certain kinds of foods, delicacies like chocolates, partying and the list goes on. Self-denial changes your lifestyle.

With some lifestyle choices you could save some extra dollars for charity donations. You feel and look better in some stack away outfits. You have extra time for doing some chores you should have done anyway. All of it is good. Most, if not all of us, have done some of these self-disciplines for spiritual growth. The period of Fort days is a good time to develop new habits and walk humbly with our God.

"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. During those forty days, he was tempted by the devil, he ate nothing, and he was famished.

Jesus answered; "It is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve him only." This is the Good News for us to write on our hearts and strive to live daily.

*A retired minister: wrote this story: Many years ago, "A man came to this country from Sweden to find work. But after only a few months, he became very homesick for his native land. Quietly, he saved every penny he could until he had enough for the cheapest ticket on an ocean-going ship to return to Sweden.*

*On the day of the sailing, the man purchased a supply of cheese and crackers to eat during the journey. He boarded the ship and found his tiny room. Each evening he would watch the elegantly dressed travelers coming and going from the great dining rooms on the ship. Then he retired to his room for cheese and crackers.*

*Finally, on the last night of the trip, he decided he had enough money for one splurge dinner. He entered the dining room and enjoyed a sumptuous feast. It was the best he had ever eaten. When the meal was over, he walked up to the dining room host to pay for the meal. To his surprise, the*

*man said, "Oh, you don't owe me anything. All of the meals are included in the cost of your ticket." Strange it is when you do not know what is offered to you!"*

It is a tragedy to go through life on cheese and crackers. Jesus offers a time of feasting at the banquet Jesus prepared for all. Jesus is the host at the banquet and invites all who would come to the feast.

Lent is a period of forty days before Easter, not counting Sundays for us to prepare for Good Friday. It is the time when we remember that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and the world. Also, we prepare for fifty days of Easter to celebrate new life through Jesus Christ. We profess God's victory over sin to resist evil and conquer death. We are a resurrection people filled with the power of the life-giving Spirit. We are not alone on this journey. God is with us and we are travelling together in community. I find it to be a difficult season and I need the support of the community. We need each other to get through these times.

Fasting means denying something that we cherish. It is something that possessed you. It is that something that we idolized. It is something that hinders our relationship with God and other people. When we fail to worship God, we worship that which we idolized. The whole purpose of fasting is to discipline our lives in such a way that Jesus Christ can be a deeper reality on life's journey.

If you do give something up, it should create a void and something else should fill the space. It should be something that gives meaning to your life. Consider where God is trying to mold and shape you into a person of faith and love. Jesus invites you to fill that emptiness with feasting on the Word of God to deepen our faith, resist evil and stand for justice.

*"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth?"* (Ps. 119:103) Jesus was famished after denying the temptations by the devil. One who is famished is hungry for something more than physical food or material wealth or the position of power. Jesus warns his followers to resist the temptation that offers false hope. One who is famished is emotionally, physically and materially drained and in need of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Here are some practical examples to follow: Read the Psalms, Prophets and the Miracles of Jesus. Practice Worship regularly as a spiritual discipline. I know our busy lives don't always allow us to be in church. Get involve in seeking justice. Search out your passion to use your time/talents and money to further God's kingdom.

Choose **fasting** from words that pollute relationships by **feasting** on words that purify the heart and brings joy to the soul. We have the ability to bring out the best in each other with kind words, encouragement and affirmation. A word of encouragement is truly one of the best pieces of evidence that the Holy Spirit is empowering and saving lives. Encouragement is like margarine on a sandwich--the more you spread it on the bread, the better the bread sticks together. The Body of Christ functions best in unity and is rooted in the Word of God.

Jesus was filled with the Spirit. Jesus did not take the fast track of sin to relieve his human suffering. Jesus knew that his mission was to bring the grace, love and compassion of God for all people. Jesus focused on that **mission** rather than self-concern. And to this day **God's Word**

*offers grace to the world. The Word nourishes the human spirit and soul. The Word of God is life-giving. The Word of God has the power to resist evil and make whole the broken spirit.*

We long for something to renew our sense of direction and guide our steps throughout our personal and communal wilderness journey. What kind of a wilderness do you find yourself wandering through? What are the chances of finding the way to Jesus?

What kind of a sacrifice God desires? Psalm 51 says: “The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me.” This is my prayer for you today.

Feasting on the Word of God Almighty offers healing for the world.

Amen.

Rev. Margaret MacDonald  
Bolton United Church