

## **“Who Needs to Hear Your Story?”**

**Luke 4:1-13**

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We have started the journey through Lent, one of the holiest seasons of the church year. Lent is the forty-six-day period between Ash Wednesday and Easter. It represents the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness preparing for ministry and the six Sundays prior to Easter. Lent is related to the words “long or lengthen,” and reflects the lengthening of the hours of daylight in spring. The purpose of Lent is to identify with Jesus and imitate him as we prepare to celebrate Easter. Lent is to Easter what Advent is to Christmas, a time of preparation.

Lent is not a common word or concept to many Baptists. I imagine few of us grew up in a church that mentioned or observed it. I did not.

However, I have embraced it as I have grown older because I see its value for my own spiritual pilgrimage. Let me share with you what it means to me as you consider or reconsider its value for your life.

**What is a person supposed to do during Lent?** “Give up something” is the most frequent answer. Many do this as a way of identifying with the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross on our behalf. Lent is more than this, though, as our text today reveals.

Personally, Lent is a time for examining my faith and sharing my faith story. How seriously do I take my faith and what impact does it have upon my life? Who needs to hear the story of my dreams and struggles to achieve them? Today’s text challenges me to ponder these questions, and I hope it does you, too.

**Immediately after his baptism, where did Jesus go?** He went to the desert. Why did he go there? He was led by the Spirit of God. For what purpose did God lead him to the desert?

As he began his public ministry, Jesus needed to grapple with a strategic question. **What kind of messianic leader was he going to be?** Was his ministry going to be about him or them, the people that needed him? Would his ministry focus upon doing what was easy or what was right, being served or serving others, testing God or trusting Him?

He could not straddle the fence and have it both ways. Others tried and failed, and he would, too.

He had to come to grips with the fact that the world was not going to be changed by another political or religious leader with a big ego, quick solutions to serious problems, a lust for power or the need to impress people. Only one type of leader was going to make the world better, a humbled, principled, disciplined, generous servant that reflected the heart of God.

**Would Jesus be that leader?** Was he willing to pay the price and stay the course in the midst of stiff pressure for him to be a military and economic hero that would make their lives easier? This was what he had to decide in the solitude of the desert. By relying upon his profound understanding of ancient Hebrew scripture and the wisdom of God, he decided he would.

To borrow an idea from Steven Vincent Benet’s short story, The Devil and Daniel Webster, Jesus decided he would not sell his soul to the devil in order to make his life easier, amass a fortune, gain power over others, receive wild acclaim or grab a false sense of security. With his power and ability, he could have done this, but he would have made the greatest sacrifice of all. He would have abandoned his mission and purpose, turning his back on God and us. For him, that was too great a sacrifice. As we now know, he would rather give his life than do this.

**What about you and me?** What kind of follower of Jesus are we? This is the question that we need to grapple with during Lent. Do we share his values and dreams? Are we as committed to God’s call as He was? Are we more concerned about doing what is easy or what is

right? Would we rather be served than serve others? Are we going to test God or trust Him? Is life about us or those around us?

Lent is a time for asking and answering these questions. It is a time for going back to the basics and discovering who I am and whose I am. It is a time for determining how serious we are about our faith, defining our mission and evaluating our commitment. It is a time for identifying those things that threaten to undermine our faithfulness so we, with God's help, can deal with them.

This is why I encourage you to create some wilderness time during Lent. **Lent is a time for solitude.** Pull away from responsibilities and distractions each day and focus upon your role in this world as a follower of Christ. Study scripture, read devotional literature, reflect and pray. Refresh your spirit and renew your commitment to God.

Identify the challenges that threaten to undermine your mission and faithfulness to Christ. Ask yourself what it means to be a Christian husband, wife, parent, child, student, business person, church member, neighbor and citizen. Discover what changes you need to make to be more Christ-like and ask God to help you begin making them today.

Let me encourage you to do one more thing. **Share your journey with those around you.** Be transparent as you share your hopes, dreams, challenges, temptations, struggles, failures and victories. Especially do this with family members or friends that look to you as a role model. Help them to understand that life is filled with tough choices that demand serious consideration.

Isn't this what Jesus did? How did this story become a part of Luke's gospel? Jesus had to share it with someone. He might have shared it with Peter in a private moment, the disciples while alone with them or perhaps he mentioned it while talking to a crowd. However it was transmitted, Luke heard or read about it and recognized its significance for his readers. No doubt their faith was being tested and their level of commitment was being threatened. They needed an inspiring role model to give them courage and confidence, and Luke knew just what they needed to read.

Who needs to hear your story? Who needs to know your dreams and the temptations that threaten them? Who would benefit from what you have learned along your journey? I can think of no better time than Lent to talk to them.