



Cultivating Rest & Letting Go of Exhaustion



< Luke 4:1-13 >

¹ Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. ³ The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread."

⁴ Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

⁵ Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. ⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

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

⁹ Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰ for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' ¹¹ and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

¹² Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ¹³ When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.



Before he began his ministry, Jesus spend 40 days in the Judean wilderness. During that time, he had to learn how to **listen** and distinguish between God's voice and the devil's voice. He had to resist the temptation to do the easy thing. He had to tune out the voices that would him astray.



Lent is a time when we also are invited to spend 40 days in a spiritual wilderness, listening to God's promptings, by **praying, fasting and giving**. It is a time to evaluate where we are and repent and turn away from our wrongdoings and turn with deliberation towards God with a changed heart. We usually talk

about what we are going to give up for Lent. What will we fast from, and then what will we do with the time and money saved through that fasting? Our theme this year invites us to think about what we might **let go** and what instead we might **cultivate**.



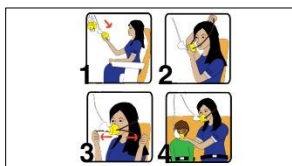
As I was thinking about this from my personal perspective and also from the perspective of where we find ourselves as a church, it was the idea of **rest** that came to my mind. So today, we are exploring **Cultivating Rest and Letting Go of Exhaustion**.

Jesus went out into the wilderness to give himself time to listen and time to prepare himself for what was ahead. But how often do we get so busy that we do not have time to prepare for the next important event in our lives? I am reminded of fruit trees. They have a seasonal rhythm. Every year in fall, trees shed or **let go** of their leaves. They rest through the winter. In the late winter while the tree is still dormant¹, the gardener will prune the tree **letting go** of some of the branches. Then the tree springs to life again and begins to blossom and produce or **cultivate** fruit.



We have this idea of Sabbath that comes from God creating the world in 6 days and resting on the 7th day. I know that I can be tempted to run myself down to exhaustion. There are weeks when I do not get my day off. There is much to do as we prepare for this pastoral transition as my time comes to an end as your pastor in June and as we prepare for Pastor Suzanne's arrival in July. The artwork and poetry that we are sharing this Lent² is to give me a chance to write a shorter sermon and free up time for the other things that I need to do.

As a church, let's rest up a little too. I do not want us to work to the point of exhaustion by the end of June, so there is no energy left in July. Let's take this season of pastoral change to do what we need to do, but also to rest sufficiently and let go of that which exhausts us.



When you fly on a plane, the emergency instructions tell you to put your own mask on before you take care of others. So let's take care of ourselves first by cultivating sufficient rest and letting go of being totally exhausted.



There were two lines in the poem we shared earlier that said:
*Let go of busyness as a sign of your self worth,
And the notion that creativity is a luxury.*

What does **exhaustion** look like to you? Is it busyness? What does **rest** look like? Perhaps it is painting or writing poetry or reading? Which voices are you listening to and whose do you need to **resist**? Can you hear God's voice? Or are you too busy? So, take the time while you are in this Lenten

¹ <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/fruits/feigen/fruit-tree-pruning.htm>

² "Cultivating & Letting Go" Lent Bundle 2019, A Sanctified Art LLC, <https://sanctifiedart.org>.

wilderness as you pray, fast and give to figure out how to rest and how to let go exhaustion.

Thanks be to God!
Amen.

Let us pray ... (Prayer of Confession)

Resources

“Cultivating & Letting Go” Lent Bundle 2019, A Sanctified Art LLC,
<https://sanctifiedart.org>