

1st Sunday in Lent (B)

02/22/2015

Jesus proclaims in today's gospel story from **Mark**: *'This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.'* It is a **proclamation** that comes on the heels of **Jesus** returning from the desert where - we are told - he is *'tempted by Satan. He [is] among wild beasts, and the angels [minister] to him.'*

Mark begins here, but **Matthew** and **Luke** begin with the birth of **Jesus**. They hint at a childhood in which **Jesus** knows that he is **loved**. Knowing that we are **loved** by **one** other person is **necessary** for each of us. It **frees** us to also know that we **are not alone**... that at least one other person **walks** with us. Somehow - when we know that we are **loved** - we don't feel as great of a need to be **perfect**. We can **make mistakes** and our world will not end.

This opens the **door** for us to know that we are **loved** by **Someone** who is **beyond** us. This **door**, however, can be (and usually is) **dreadfully frightening** for us. We know that beyond this **door** lives things that we have **locked away**; things that fill us with **anxiety**; things that we have **demonized**; and things that have caused us **pain**.

They can be: a **failed relationship**; a **habit** of which we are **ashamed**; a time in our life that we want **to forget** and don't want **to remember**; **demons** that **invade** our sleep; and **wild beasts** that seem **to tear** us apart. They **express** themselves in the way that we **mistreat** others;

our **negativity** and **complaining**; our **overeating** and **over drinking**; our **driving** like we just **bought** the road; our **neglect** of ourselves and others; our **lashing out** at those who are most close to us.

Unfortunately, instead of allowing the **Spirit** to push us and guide us to a place in which we can begin to **practice a willingness to converse** with all that we **fear** behind the **door** that we have locked, we **settle** on giving up candy and desserts. This is not a **criticism**. We - after all - have been trained to approach **Lent** in this way: **to get rid of sin instead of dialoguing; to judge ourselves instead of observing.**

Jesus shows us that our **demons and wild beasts, transformed by love, become angels who minister** to us. It begins with **knowing** that we are **loved** - however imperfectly - by **one** other person (or possibly by a dog or a cat). It cannot, however, **end here**. It is also necessary for us to **practice trusting** ourselves which frees us to also trust that wherever the **Spirit** pushes us, and whatever we encounter, **God** is there because: ***‘This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand.’***