

Sermon Title: **“Lead Us Not Into Temptation”**

Bible: **Luke 4:1-13**

When: on the 1st Sunday in Lent, March 6th, 2022

Where: about 30 people (plus YouTube live streaming viewers) at Gilroy UMC

### **Opening Prayer**

O Lord, we come to you as we are—weak, vulnerable, and broken. We come to you because you are merciful and gracious. We come to you, because you are our hope and resurrection.

Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

### **1. Sundays in Lent**

In 2022, Lent began last Wednesday, March 2nd, which was Ash Wednesday. The word Lent means “Lengthen” from the Anglo Saxon word *Lencten*. So, it refers to the lengthening days of spring. And how many days? It is forty days, which represents the time Jesus spent in the wilderness from today’s scripture reading of Luke. It begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. But these forty days do not include Sundays. That’s because each Sunday represents a mini-Easter. So, we call them Sundays IN Lent rather than Sundays OF Lent.

While we are observing a holy Lenten season, we can taste the joy of forgiveness, hope, and the resurrection. We know that Ash Wednesday is just the beginning of Lent. At the end of Lent, there is an Easter Celebration. Death is not the end of the story. There is a resurrection

not only of Jesus Christ, but also of ourselves. So, we can be hopeful and joyful, and sing Alleluia, even during Sundays in Lent.

## **2. The Temptation of Jesus**

Today's scripture reading of Luke is about three temptations directed at Jesus. Jesus was tempted, because Jesus possessed certain abilities. Jesus had the power to make stone become bread. But Jesus did not. Jesus knew that bread was needed for life, but Jesus also knew that bread was not everything. Jesus had the freedom to choose the whole world, rather than God. Jesus chose to worship God only. What Jesus needed was not the world but the Lord. Jesus had the love of God, so Jesus could test God's love. To Jesus, there was no need for it, because Jesus knew that God's love was surely there, even when Jesus could not feel and experience it. What do you have? What temptations have you met before?

## **3. By Self-examination and Repentance**

Many times when we have access to things like power, freedom, and love, we can be tempted. Last Tuesday, I needed to see a doctor, because I found I had some hair loss. I assume that it was because of the stress from my messages. As you might remember, in February, I shared the messages about an elephant in the room, which used to be a null curriculum. I needed to be brave, and I needed to be ready for any feedback, positive or negative. And I assume that it was well-delivered and well-accepted, right? But why did I have some hair loss? On Ash Wednesday, I was thinking of this deeply. And I found that I needed to confess my wrong motivation. I thought that my message was for God's Kingdom

and God's glory. I thought that my message was for our congregation to make disciples, who have open minds and open hearts. But what I dug out is myself, who wanted to be a prophetic preacher and to be loved by all. What I most cared for was not God's glory, our congregation's spiritual growth, but myself, my pride, and my arrogance. I did not preach because I wanted to be loved by all. I did preach, because I wanted to be loved as a prophetic preacher. Because of these things, I think that my hair was lost. I cried a lot, because I thought that I was here to serve you, not to be served by you. I am so sorry to God and our congregation. Of course, I need your honest feedback, and I prefer your positive and productive feedback. But I need to remember that it is not all about my messages. God's kingdom, and to make disciples of Jesus Christ, who have God's love and grace, our spiritual practice and discipline should be my goal. And I hope and pray that it becomes what I want beyond what I should.

Because I had the power of the pulpit, I was tempted. What do you have? What temptation have you met?

#### **4. Jesus' Victory and Our Victory**

We are invited to observe a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance, by prayer, fasting, and self-denial, and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word. I hope that we remember we are just dust. We are weak, vulnerable, and broken. But at the end of this Lent, there is Jesus' victory, like today's victory. There is hope and resurrection. That's because God is with us, even though we are broken, and because we are broken. God will give us not

the shame, but the repentance; not the punishment, but the forgiveness; not the death, but the life. Jesus' victory will be our victory. So, let us come closer to God, our Lord, during this Lenten season.

### **Closing Prayer**

Merciful and gracious God, we come to you, as we are in the temptation, as we are broken. O Lord, please lead us to be closer to you. Thank you so much for your mercy and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.