

Ministerial Musings

Jesus spent forty days in the desert struggling with temptation/the devil (you can decide which, I'm not sure it makes a difference). Lent's a fine time for us to do likewise.

He won his battle in part by remembering who and whose he was. In so doing, he was following his religious heritage. Over and over in the Old Testament, our Jewish ancestors reminded themselves who they were and what God had done for them. For instance: My father was a wandering Aramean who went down to Egypt...there he became a nation great, strong and numerous...When the Egyptians maltreated and oppressed us, we cried to the Lord...He brought us out of Egypt...bringing us into this country, he gave us this land flowing with milk and honey. (Deuteronomy 26:5-9)



When they forgot what God had done for them, and who God called them to be, the result was ugly.

We could look down our noses at them for it, but – let's face it – we've been there, done that; and the results were distressingly similar.

According to Luke 4:1-13, Jesus avoided this trap by putting God first, and he used Scripture to do it:

- *"Man does not live by bread alone."* [The full quotation is "...not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the Lord." (Deuteronomy 8:3)]
- *"You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve."* (Deuteronomy 6:13)
- *"You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test."* (Deuteronomy 6:16)

You might say Jesus fasted from bread, but he feasted on God's Word.

According to a prayer by William Ward, when we put God first we can:

- Fast from fear; Feast on Faith
- Fast from despair; Feed on hope
- Fast from depressing news;
- Feed on prayer
- Fast from discontent;
- Feast on gratitude.
- Fast from anger and worry;
- Feed on patience.
- Fast from negative thinking; Feast on positive thinking.
- Fast from bitterness;
- Feed on love and forgiveness.
- Fast from words that wound; Feast on words that heal.
- Fast from gravity;
- Feast on joy and humor.

I like Ward's idea that for every Lenten fast, there's a feast. The struggle with temptation is a pain, but there really IS joy at the end of it.

Jesus gave up meeting his own immediate needs, he gave up glory, he gave up power. But he feasted on the knowledge that he was a beloved child of God. I've been to a lot of feasts and they were fun, but I suspect the feast our Lord enjoyed is the only one that truly satisfies.

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February 2015