

TEXT: Luke 4:1-13  
THEME: Led by the Spirit  
SUBJECT: Testing  
TITLE: Soul Matters

First Sunday in Lent  
10 Marcy 2019  
Messiah Moravian  
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In baptism the Holy Spirit descends like a dove upon Jesus and he hears a voice from heaven declare, "You are my son, the beloved, with you I am well pleased." In the very next moment, Jesus full of the Holy Spirit, is led by the Spirit in the wilderness where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit, living a Spirit led life, is not a hands in the air, charismatic high, but a confrontation with all that is unholy. To be loved by God means learning to love God more than anything: more than all the possessions in the world, more than all the power in the world, more than life itself.

We know matter matters. We are material beings living in a material world. The question the devil raises is whether we are material beings only, whether the material world alone is sufficient to satisfy us.

If we are nothing more than biological mechanisms, predetermined to feel and act and think according to our material makeup only, then bread alone should be enough. Jesus doesn't buy the devil's argument. We do not live by bread alone.

The first soul matter we must decide is whether there are holy moments in life that should be honored and consecrated as such, or whether it is only matter all the way down. Christian Wiman observes, "a metallic materialism is never present without inconsolable despair."

If despair is the end of living by bread alone, then maybe despair is a sign we are more than matter.

If we are matter only then power becomes the holy grail. Better to be a dictator than a peasant, for the only thing the meek will inherit is a boot on the back of the neck. The more power the greater the access to money and pleasure. When power is the ultimate value, it is not just nature that is red in tooth and claw, but human nature as well.

Why is the devil under the impression that all the power in the world is his to give? Is the devil delusional? In a world where power is the ultimate value it becomes demonic. Just as despair is the end of a metallic materialism, so suffering is the end of autocratic power.

The final matter our souls must confront has to do with the nature of God. Truth be told, we would prefer our god to be a superhero who rescues us at every dangerous turn. I'm sure you remember the movie "It's a Wonderful Life." An angel is sent to bear up

George Bailey. This angel is not from the “A Team.” Who knew their were minor leagues in heaven? This angel has to earn his wings by saving George Bailey’s life.

The idea of guardian angels waiting every moment to keep us from tripping up, falling down and injuring ourselves is comforting. If it were true we could put risk managers out of work. We could sky dive without parachutes. How wild and weird a world without risk or its consequences. Only businesses “too big to fail” live in such a world and we are their guardian angels.

If we insist on our security as proof of God’s reality and care, we trade faith, hope and love, for magical thinking. Just as the first temptation is to deny the reality of the spiritual world, so the last temptation is to deny the reality of the material world. The end of trading trust and a life of service for a magic wand and life in fantasy land is death.

Fasting in the silence and solitude of the wilderness reveals the conflict between the holy and the unholy, the war raging for the life of our souls. In this life the war never ends. Even when we win a particular battle, the devil merely retreats waiting for an opportune time.

Lent is the frank recognition that as long as other loves compete with love of God, we will live with temptation. Learning to love the One who loves us, who calls us son/ daughter, who takes delight in us, is the satisfaction of our soul’s deepest hunger.