

On the Road to Sacred Settlements
Matthew 4:1-11
First Sunday in Lent
February 26, 2023
Pastor John Klawiter, Preaching

Grace and peace to you my siblings in Christ,

Let's get one thing perfectly clear—we can't match Christ's temptation. That's not what this story is about.

Jesus isn't setting a bar for us to try to attain—on the contrary, Jesus is demonstrating a level of resistance to the devil that **ONLY** Jesus could attain.

The thing about the devil, or evil, or whatever we want to call the presence of Satan—is that this presence is sneaky. Even with Jesus.

The devil sounds really really good. That's why it's called temptation.

Kenneth Halstead writes: "Evil may be wrong, but it is not stupid, at least not at its most powerful. It does not deal in honest, straightforward, and fair competition. It fights dirty and deceptively, using every clever, double-binding trick to trap us and rob us of our humanity and our eternal birthright."

Our eternal birthright?

The devil is trying to convince us we don't need Jesus. The devil wants us to believe we can do it on our own. The devil tries to trick us that we can have something better, if we just listen to those clever traps.

The devil isn't something far off. It's deeply and fully personal.

We feel that pull. We succumb to temptation.

From the Garden of Eden to Christ on the cross, the Bible provides stories of how the devil tries to trick us.

Yet, through Christ, we find a partner. After baptism, Jesus spends time alone in the wilderness. When he emerges, he begins his ministry. He's renewed and strengthened—and now it's time to fulfill his calling.

But he doesn't do it alone. He brings partners with him. Disciples. Strangers. Sinners. Servants. There are partners on the road all the way to the cross.

At Faith, our mission statement is that we are Led by the Spirit to Share God's grace.

Our vision is that we are the body of Christ, welcoming all, inspired by God, and sent out to live our faith.

These statements encompass our awareness as a church that we aren't doing Christ's work alone. We are collaborating. We are teaching. We are humbly listening to what God is up to.

Throughout Lent, we will hear from different ministry partners. Where is God leading Faith? What has the Holy Spirit been up to in our church?

Back in 2019, an encounter with Gabrielle Clowdus of an organization known as Settled sparked a hope-filled and encouraging ministry for our congregation.

What began as a dream of one house for a homeless veteran began a journey for our church to meet our unsheltered neighbors. We visited them where they lived—in their tents, on their park bench, in the wilderness.

We ate with our unsheltered neighbors. We learned about what our neighbors wanted. There was a quest to find family through community.

We hoped that we could be a site for a Settlement, but despite big dreams of an 18 home Settlement here at Faith Lutheran, we also learned how valuable our research and experience could be to help churches closer to county services in this work.

We also learned that any future settlements at Faith would begin much smaller and have deeper roots. We have found multiple ways to support our unsheltered neighbors beyond Tiny Houses—to partner with Washington and Anoka County as needed.

Last summer, a **settlement at Mosaic Church became a reality (Mosaic)**—including a house Faith paid for and **built (Faith’s house)**. Then, just before this winter, a new site with two houses, is up and running, for now.

It’s at a familiar place to me—Prince of Peace in Roseville, where I served for three and a half years before coming to Faith. Here is their story

VIDEO

Faith continues to walk the walk—through partnerships, through advocacy—including Deacon Nina and Colleen Diemer bringing forward a resolution to our larger ELCA conference assembly yesterday to help pave the way for congregations looking to host Sacred Settlements. It passed and will be taken to synod assembly in May.

There is a lot of evil in the world. The devil’s temptations have created disruptions for many families and caused hurt and loss. We may be tempted to turn a blind eye. We may be tempted to let somebody else worry about it. On the other extreme, we may be tempted to think we can solve the whole thing by ourselves.

When faced with this temptation, Jesus says “worship the LORD your God and serve only him.”

Whether that is the ministry of the church or what dwells in each of our hearts, we aren’t doing any of this work alone. We have Jesus, right by our side. Amen.