

# **“A Faster Horse”**

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March 9, 2025

The First Sunday in Lent

St. Michael's Episcopal Church

Independence, MO

May I speak with the Breath of God, from the Word of God, in the Name of God. Amen.

- Last Sunday I opened with a quote from Richard Rohr
  - “A pain that is not transformed is transmitted”
  - Still worth pondering...
- This time I’m going a different direction, by quoting Henry Ford
  - Founder of Ford Motor Company, and assembly line innovator
  - Also a notorious antisemite, so not necessarily someone to admire or emulate.
  - But his approach to innovation and the future is expressed well in this quote:
  - “If I’d asked the people what they wanted, they’d have said they wanted a faster horse.”
- Henry Ford managed to give the people something they really wanted.
  - It’s just not something they knew to ask for until it was right in front of them.
- What do the people want? What do we really want?
  - What do we want out of our spiritual lives?
  - And what do we want out of the church?
- Jesus is confronted with this question in this morning’s Gospel
  - After 40 days of Fasting, he’s starving and weak
  - And the Adversary pounces on him in his weakness
  - Do you want bread? You can have it.
  - Do you want power? You can have it.
  - Do you want vindication? You can have it.

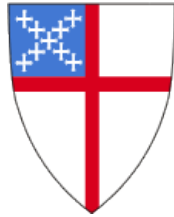
- But to Jesus, this was just a list of faster horses.
  - He knew the difference between his perceived needs and his true needs – His genuine purpose.
- What are our perceived needs? And what are our true needs?
  - Better still: What do our neighbors need from us?
  - (Notice I didn't ask, what does our BCP need from us, or what does our Diocese need from us?)
- General Convention may convene every 3 years and call for incremental change.
  - But incremental adjustments and tweaks aren't going to cut it
  - Because we don't live in an incremental world anymore
- People are drowning in constant media and entertainment
  - They're drowning in pharmaceuticals being advertised to help them cope with other pharmaceuticals
  - They're drowning in the chaos that comes from having total access to knowledge, and almost no access to wisdom
  - They're drowning in having a billion worldviews to choose from
  - They're drowning in the isolation that results from the guarantee that no one will make the same choices that you just did. So whatever you chose... you're on your own.
  - Our neighbors are drowning in a system that's designed specifically to swallow them up. A system that pounces on them at their weakest moments and says:
    - "Hey just turn this rock into bread, that's what you really need."
    - It's a system that promises us wealth and power, if we only bow down and worship it.
- This is the beach that God has put us on. The people are drowning.

- And after every last neighbor has drowned in a sea of confusion, and isolation
- God is going to ask us, “What were you doing while my children were drowning?”
- And we might have to confess that we were building sandcastles
- Worse than that, we were arguing about how to build them.
- Henry Ford got a lot of things wrong, but he got one big thing right: He understood a true human need: Freedom.
  - In his case, freedom of movement. Faster and easier ways for people to transport goods and to get where they’re going
  - But when you ask the people, they just say “a faster horse please”
  - Because a horse is the only kind of transportation they could imagine
  - What are our perceived needs? And what are our true needs?
- How do we think of the future of St. Michael’s? and our purpose?
  - Do we think only in the terms we know? Only in the terms we’re comfortable with? Doing all the same old things, but better?
  - Or do we allow the Holy Spirit to show us something we can’t imagine?
  - Do we dream of a car? Or only a faster horse?
  - But we don’t have to dream of a car. We can do what Henry Ford did... dig deep and recognize that our true need is Freedom. Our neighbors’ true need is the Freedom we’ve found in Jesus.
- Right now it might be hard to show our neighbors that we have that Freedom.

- But mark my words... pretty soon this system is going to start collapsing under its own weight. It's already happening
- And our neighbors will be desperate for anything that will set them free from it.
- Can we show them what it looks like to be One in the Spirit?
- To gather in peace and purpose despite all kinds of differences?
- I believe we can.
- And if I ever stop believing that St. Michael's can offer true Freedom and true Fulfillment to this city
  - You'll know it right away. Because I'll be gone.
  - I have no patience anymore for building sandcastles
  - Or breeding faster horses
  - We are here for a reason. We are here to bring Life. We're here to bring Freedom. We're here to bring Fulfillment
  - All the things that Jesus brought us.
  - He found us at our worst and brought us Life and Freedom.
  - He fulfilled his purpose so that we could find ours.
- It's a purpose we won't find in a book, as wonderful as our books are
  - It's a purpose we won't find in a facility, or a liturgy, or a song
  - As wonderful as all those things are
  - When we look with our hearts, we will find that purpose the same place Jesus did
  - Where will we find Freedom, for ourselves and for others?
  - Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.
- So let's go and find it.
  - Amen

The Lessons Appointed for Use on the  
**First Sunday in Lent**

Year C  
RCL



Deuteronomy 26:1-11  
Romans 10:8b-13  
Luke 4:1-13  
Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

## **The Collect**

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## **Old Testament**

### **Deuteronomy 26:1-11**

When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, "Today I declare to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us." When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God, you shall make this response before the LORD your God: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into

Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O LORD, have given me." You shall set it down before the LORD your God and bow down before the LORD your God. Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house.

## **The Psalm**

### **Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16**

#### *Qui habitat*

- 1 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, \*  
abides under the shadow of the Almighty.
- 2 He shall say to the LORD,  
"You are my refuge and my stronghold, \*  
my God in whom I put my trust."
- 9 Because you have made the LORD your refuge, \*  
and the Most High your habitation,
- 10 There shall no evil happen to you, \*  
neither shall any plague come near your dwelling.
- 11 For he shall give his angels charge over you, \*  
to keep you in all your ways.
- 12 They shall bear you in their hands, \*  
lest you dash your foot against a stone.

- 13 You shall tread upon the lion and adder; \*  
you shall trample the young lion and the serpent under your feet.
- 14 Because he is bound to me in love,  
therefore will I deliver him; \*  
I will protect him, because he knows my Name.
- 15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; \*  
I am with him in trouble;  
I will rescue him and bring him to honor.
- 16 With long life will I satisfy him, \*  
and show him my salvation.

## **The Epistle**

### **Romans 10:8b-13**

"The word is near you,  
on your lips and in your heart"

(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

## **The Gospel**

### **Luke 4:1-13**

After his baptism, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone



to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written,

'Worship the Lord your God,  
and serve only him.'"

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written,

'He will command his angels concerning you,  
to protect you,'

and

'On their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

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*Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.*

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