**SUNDAY, 3/6/22**

**SERMON ON LUKE 4:1-13**

Jorge Rodriquez was new to our country and did not speak very much English.

He had no lawyer the day he appeared in court

 for hitting a parked car while driving drunk.

He went before the judge with what he thought was his "trump card."

Rodriquez approached the bench and handed the judge

 a "Get Out of Jail Free Card" from the game of Monopoly.

He had trusted someone who had told him that this card was all he needed.

But he was wrong.

And he ended up spending some time in jail.

I wonder if the scene on Judgement Day is not going to be all that different.

Imagine many people approaching God's judgment seat believing

 they have their spiritual matters in order.

How sad it will be when they discover

 that what they had put their hope in was false.

It is worth no more than a "Get Out of Jail Free Card" from the game of Monopoly.

Maybe they had trusted in their own goodness.

Or maybe they thought there would be some kind of second chance,

 or that they could work out some kind of deal with God.

But, just like Jorge Rodriquez, there will be many on the day of Judgement

 who will not be able to escape punishment.

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

The devil said to Jesus: "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 showed Him all the kingdoms of the world,

 and said to Him: "If you will worship me, all this will be yours."

But Jesus answered him:

“It is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”

Then the devil placed Him on the pinnacle of the temple and said:

 "Throw yourself down, for He will command his angels to protect you.

But Jesus said to him: "It is said: Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

God does not want us to put Him to a test.

He wants us to worship and trust Him.

He wants us to go and do as He guides us.

Anything God has ever done anywhere, He can do here.

Anything God has ever done for anyone, He can do for us.

When Henry Ward Beecher was a boy,

 he had a teacher at school who asked one of the boys in class

 a question, which the boy answered.

The teacher became angry and told the boy he was wrong,

 and commanded him to: "Sit down!"

The boy was obviously confused because he thought he had answered correctly.

 But abruptly he sat down.

Several boys were asked the same question.

They gave the same answer, and were promptly rebuked by their teacher.

Finally Henry was asked to stand and answer the question.

He gave the same answer, and was commanded in no uncertain terms:

 to "Sit down!"

But Beecher held his ground and insisted that the answer was correct.

For a few moments the teacher stormed at him,

 but seeing Beecher wasn't going to give up he smiled and said,

"Well, boys, you were all correct, but Henry was the only one

 sure enough to stand up for it."

Many people have lost their faith in Jesus

 because they simply lacked the courage to stand up for what they believed. When someone challenged their faith they just gave up, and sat down.

We can trust God, even when the world seems inside, outside, and upside down.

God doesn't change.

The truth is still the truth, since the beginning of time.

Anything God has ever done, he can do now.

Halfway through the second grade, Mrs. Sergeant,

 who lived up to her name, sent a note home to the young boy's parents.

It was added onto his report card and therefore entered into his permanent record. It said, "Your son day dreams too much.

He is always looking out the window,

 and his mind wanders far from the task at hand."

What if he could never stop this dreaming?

What would become of a boy who dreamed of something more,

 something magnificent,

 something incredible,

 something amazing

 something so much greater than what we see with our eyes?

We who believe and trust in Jesus, ought to be dreamers like this young boy.

When we are able to dream, and imagine, and believe in God's plans,

 we can accomplish great things.

It is not about sitting around until we are absolutely certain

 God is calling us to a particular task, direction, country, or ministry.

Nor is it waiting for the doors to open, so we can go there easily.

Planning is an act of faith.

Jesus never told his disciples to wait for an invitation.

He told them to go, and to do.

Obedience is doing the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason,

 without stalling, or putting it off for later.

Many believe Lent is a time for giving things up.

But God is not so interested, in what we give up for forty days,

 and then return to after Easter.

He is much more interested in us giving up the sins, mistakes and wrongs,

 in our lives, forever.

Lent is not meant to be a time when we believe:

 We can suffer like Jesus by giving up chocolate, or Facebook, or coffee,

 so we can be more like Jesus!

It is not about focusing on personal self-justification,

 but on the grace of God.

Nothing is supposed to be about us working to ensure our well-being,

 or salvation with God.

Giving things up does not mean it will somehow earn God's pleasure.

We never act more like God than when we are loving, and giving.

It is the good person, the gracious soul, the generous heart,

 who helps the down-trodden.

The gracious person is one who has a heart of compassion.

That person looks around, and sees others who are suffering and in need of help. Wherever and whenever the loving person can reach out and help someone,

 he or she does it right away.

The opportunity to help someone can slip by very quickly.

We are never more like God than when we are giving.

 But we shouldn't give out of guilt.

 We shouldn't give out of obligation.

We give because it's the right thing to do,

 it is the loving thing to do.

It is what God calls us to do.

However, remember this:

 Goodness will not get us into heaven.

 We can never be good enough to get into heaven.

It is only through the mercy and grace of God

 that we can be welcomed into Heaven.

Jesus was willing to die for each one of us,

 So we can be with Him in Heaven.

Above all, Lent is a time of renewal.

Lent is the promise of a new start for each one of us.

It is not meant to be a time of discouragement or sorrow.

It is a time when we rejoice that God loves and forgives us.

It is a time of new life, and new beginnings.

AMEN