

What do you see? What does the sign say?

Some of you might remembering seeing this before...
but what was your first impressions?

GOD IS NOWHERE.

That's the first thing we see.

But look again.

Do you see it?

Whether you believe that the devil is a real being or whether you think that the devil, or Satan, as he is just an image,

a personification of that which is opposite of God,

temptation is real,

whether it comes from somewhere outside ourselves or from the darkest parts of our own hearts, we know that evil is real.

We know that that there are negative forces that tempt us give up on God, or better yet, forces that tempt us to be our own gods.

I don't know how much we actually talk or think about the devil these days; other than our once a year halloween images of the red suit and the pitchfork.

But according to Scripture....the devil is real, or at least the forces that the devil represents; basically anything that is contrary to God.

Our church father Martin Luther had a keen awareness of the devil.

He was always doing battle with the devil,

both in his mind and in his little writing room in Wartburg Castle.

When Luther was hidden away in the castle to keep him safe from those who wanted to kill him, he spent much time in a little room translating the Bible in German

and when you visit there today,

you can still see the black ink stain on the wall where he threw the inkwell at the devil in one of his tirades.

Today, in our Gospel lesson, we hear after his baptism, Jesus was driven into the wilderness where he was tempted by the devil for 40 days.

And the devil in his craftiness has a way of twisting the truth.

Okay, he lies.

He has no power to make Jesus to anything,

so he offers things that are not his to give,

hoping that weakened by hunger and thirst and fatigue

Jesus might believe.

Who provides our daily bread? Not the devil.

To whom do the kingdoms of the world belong? Not the devil.

Who is deserves the worship and praise of humanity? Not the devil.

Yet, there he is:

offering what is not his to give,
knowing that the only way he can get power
is if we give it to him.

The devil's only weapons are lies.

But he's tricky.

He certainly isn't going to tell you he's lying,
and part of his strategy is that he shows up in places that you wouldn't expect.

He even takes the word of God and tries to twist it to his own advantage.

William Shakespeare wrote:

or the devil will even use the church to try to take our focus away from God,
and cast doubts in our minds about God's power in our lives.

In his book, the Screwtape letters, first published in 1942, C. S. Lewis, the story takes the form a a series of letter

from a senior demon, Screwtape,

to his nephew, a junior tempter named Wormwood,

so as to advise him about his methods to secure the damnation of a man only known as the patient.

Page 4 and 5

The devil's job is to take our focus away from God, even in here in worship.

How many times have we gotten distracted by what someone else is wearing,
or irritated by the person talking loudly behind us,
or the cell phone ringing
or a myriad of other things.

It's the devil's job to keep us anxious, frightened, irritated, and doubtful

if the devil can just keep us focused on the message:

GOD IS NOWHERE.

We might forget the true message that **GOD IS NOW HERE.**

You see, we have the promise that God is with us. Always.

Whether we feel God or not.

And we have been promised that on the cross, Jesus actually defeated the power of death and sin;
the power of evil in our lives.

The battle is already over.

But the devil's job is to make us forget that.

To make us doubt that.

Even though he has already lost,

he doesn't want to lose alone,
so he continues to try to get as many people to follow him as possible.

In the Gospel, he does not succeed in his attempt to tempt Jesus,
but we hear that he doesn't give up.

Instead, he departs “until an opportune time”

so when was next opportune time in Jesus life?

- Was it When Peter tells him that the Messiah of God should not have to die.
And Jesus rebukes Peter and says “get behind me Satan”
- or was it at the last supper when John tells us that Satan had already put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus
- or was it in the garden, when Jesus says, God, maybe I don't have to do this after all, could you take this cup from me?
- Or was on the cross, at that moment that the sky turned black and Jesus breathed his last?

The devil kept trying,
and for three days, he must of actually thought he won.
But then on the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead
and the deal was sealed.

And now, even though the devil continues to look for the next opportune time in our lives,
we have the certainty that evil has no power over us.....
we have the assurance that God with us and for us
we have the promise that GOD IS NOW HERE, and will never leave us.

The devil may still be looking for the opportune time
but that doesn't have to scare us,
because devil's temptation can be flipped around to God's opportunity

every temptation is just another opportunity to obey
another opportunity to trust,
another opportunity to grow in faith,
another opportunity to pray.
Another opportunity to seek God's help.

How might your life be different this week if you went out looking for those opportunities?
How might you life be different if you went out looking for the signs that confirm that GOD IS NOW
HERE?

God of promise, help us to trust in your power to transform our lives. Help us to withstand the forces
that seek to rob us of abundant life. Help us to dismiss the lies that make us doubt ourselves and our
relationship with You. Fill us with trust and help us to see opportunities for life and renewal all around
us. Amen

