

*Sitting Still ~ Still Sitting:  
In the Wilderness*

**Text:**  
Luke 4:1-13

**A sermon preached by**  
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Lent 1



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## Luke 4:1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>The devil said to him, “If



you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” <sup>4</sup>Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’” <sup>5</sup>Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” <sup>8</sup>Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’” <sup>9</sup>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, <sup>10</sup>for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’ <sup>11</sup>and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’” <sup>12</sup>Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” <sup>13</sup>When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.





It was this week 56 years ago – February 7, 1960 – that the Nashville Sit-in Movement began as a civil disobedience challenge to segregation laws that forced black and white people to sit separately at food establishments. The sit-ins began at lunch counters in 5 & 10 stores across the American South and were met with verbal intimidation and physical violence. A piece of our history – not just for during Black History Month – but a piece of history that we all need to remember. Sitting can make a huge difference.

I was 4 ½ months old when those events took place. And I was spending a lot of time sitting comfortably cradled in my mother’s arms when the American racial civil rights movement sat in defiance of hate.



56 years later, this week that began with February 7, I found myself sitting a lot.



Mom has been living at Wesley Enhanced Living's a skilled nursing center in Doylestown since just before Christmas after she had a fall that broke the femur in her left leg. I've been back-and-forth to see her most weeks on Monday, Wednesday and Friday – a 45 minute drive each direction – plenty of time to sit and think and pray as I wound my way through Montgomery and Bucks counties. Over these past 2 months I sat with mom in her room, in the dining room, in the therapy room, in the activity room which comprises the full 9<sup>th</sup> floor of the building. And this week, I sat with mom on Monday as she struggled with living and Tuesday until 7 pm when I told her I loved her and walked out the door. She died about 6 hours later on Ash Wednesday morning this week.



I sat with her during her last few days. And it was a beautiful thing.



“Sitting silently beside a friend who is hurting may be the best gift we can give.”

Wednesday late morning we sat in the office at the funeral home making plans. Wednesday at lunch I sat with my brother as we

laughed and cried together over a shared a bowl of soup and a pint of Guinness for our lunch. Wednesday after noon I sat in my car again driving to Doylestown to thank and hug the staff that cared so loving these past few weeks. Wednesday evening I sat at mom's house with my sister and my kids as we sorted through photos and memories of mom. Yesterday, after seeing mom's body for the last time, I gathered with memories and stories around a table with family as we broke bread and laughed and remembered.



In Judaism, the period after the burial of a close relative is called *shiva*, meaning seven, when the family will “sit *shiva*” in the home of the deceased for 7 days of mourning. There is something meaningful to that ritual that we should all welcome. My sitting wasn't in one place these past 7 days, but it has been comforting to sit with those who mourn with me, to sit and open emails and cards of condolence, to sit in prayer and silence, to sit at table with food and laughter.



Lent is a season of sitting. *Sitting Still ~ Still Sitting* is the sermon series for the season when we'll be exploring what it might mean to simply sit still for a time in a world which spins and whirs around us. What might it mean to take 40 days to sit and pray and reflect and focus on what's truly important to our lives? What might it mean to "sit silently with a friend who is hurting"? What might be the gift in sitting in the dark with a struggling person who isn't so sure there is light out there somewhere? What might it mean to sit and listen, to sit and pray, to sit and just sit?

Jesus was in the wilderness, Luke's Gospel tells us, eating nothing during 40 days. At the end of those 40 days he confronted temptation and internal conflict about his place in God's world and the journey ahead of him.



I tend to think of this confrontation with what Luke calls "the devil" as an active time of struggle and wrestling. Probably many of us think that way. Movies and art work and dramatic reading often take us down this path – Jesus and some evil looking being face-to-face in a duel about who is more powerful.

"Command this stone to become a loaf of bread."

"One does not live by bread alone."

“I will give you authority over the kingdoms of the world, Jesus, if you will worship me.”

“Worship the Lord your God, and serve only God.”

“Throw yourself down from the pinnacle of the Temple and God’s angels will protect you.”

“Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”

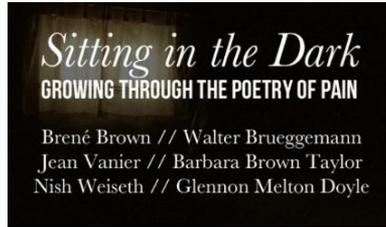
But you know what? Jesus has just come to the end of a 40 day fast. I don’t know if you’ve ever tried that – I haven’t – but there is no active anything after no food for 40 days. I’ve fasted a couple of days at a time and I know it saps your strength and energy and clouds (or enhances) your mind.



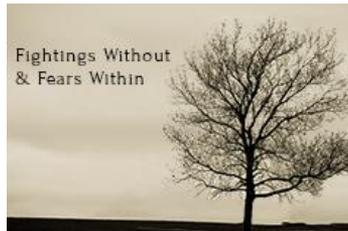
For Jesus at the end of 40 days, there was mostly just sitting still. Stillness and praying, stillness and focus, stillness and healing, stillness and internal wrestling, stillness and God. Jesus was sitting still.

Let’s do that together these next 40 days. Let’s sit together and pray and eat and laugh and share and focus. Let’s sit in mourning, sit in joy, sit in darkness and sit in light. Let’s sit in pain and in healing, in strength and in weakness.

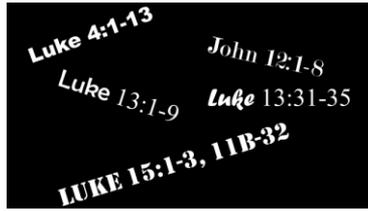
Join me, will you?



Tuesday evenings beginning this week (Wednesday this week, because I'll be sitting with my family on Tuesday), let's sit and eat soup and watch the video sessions in *Sitting in the Dark: Growing Through the Poetry of Pain* as we sit with some of today's most inspiring writers, preachers, speakers – Barbara Brown Taylor, Brene Brown, Jean Vanier, Walter Brueggemann, Glennon Doyle Melton, Parker Palmer. We'll sit with each other in brokenness and weeping, with enlarging life, with feeling pain, with knowing discipleship. Tuesdays, 6:30 soup, 7:00 discussion; 7:50 communion.



Next Sunday, we'll sit together first in worship, next at table, finally in conversation as we receive back from John Janka his recommendations following his work with us in hearing and wrestling with Hope's "fightings within and fears without" as John Wesley names it, using Paul's Corinthian text in the hymn "And Are We Yet Alive." And we'll move forward from the table in hope moving toward healing and wholeness and what's next.



Scripture and our sermon series this season, *Sitting Still ~ Still Sitting*, invite us to sit *In the Wilderness, Under God's Wing, Beneath a Tree, At the Banquet, In Sorrow*.



Come Holy Week at the end of this journey we are called to sit at table with Jesus and friends, to sit in the Garden where the world and God's will collide, at the trial where questions are left unanswered, at the foot of the cross as we stare down death, at the tomb and again with friends as the reality comes to light.



We sit. Let us sit together in darkness and in light this season. Let us sit still with each other, sit quietly with each other, and let us be God's comfort on this journey of days.

Amen.