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*Liturgies of Death and Life*

Often, at night, when Ole and I are relaxing after a long day, we will be sitting together on the couch, but have earbuds in our ears. He is usually listening to music and me, probably some cooking show, sermon, or news program. It's nice to be together even while doing our own things to wind down. It is only a struggle when one of us wants to share something with the other person. With noise coming through those earbuds often what gets heard right away is not quite the message that the other wanted to convey. Our own often hilarious game of telephone ensues.

What do you hear?

The root meaning of the word catechesis means to learn by word of mouth or to resound in the ear. Lent- throughout history has been a time for seekers, catechumens, to explore and discern Christian faith, and specifically to prepare for baptism at the Easter Vigil.

It is as though, during Lent, we all are catechumens. As we prepare to be renewed in our baptisms at Easter. We learn anew during these forty days what it means to journey with Jesus to Jerusalem. We follow Jesus down the path that leads to the cross. We ask especially during Lent, so we can ask all year, what does it mean to die daily and to rise again with Christ? We listen again to the voice that spoke over Jesus at his baptism and that same voice that spoke over yours and mine. A voice that can be hard to hear amid all of the noise. With the proverbial earbuds that the world attempts to fit us with. Pumping in their messages. It can be hard to hear.

We find ourselves where we are led each first Sunday in Lent. To an all too familiar place. Following his baptism the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. If Jesus found himself going directly from the river Jordan into the middle of temptation and testing we shouldn't be surprised that we find ourselves in many a wilderness experiencing the same no matter when it was that we were plunged under that great flood of mercy.

In the wilderness things get distorted. We hear those messages, whether we are being tempted or tested, all we know is the voice of the triune God tends to get muffled and drowned out. The liturgies of this world attempt to do their work on us. Catechize us. Resound in our ears.

The creeds out there are inviting/tempting us to orient our lives around them. It is like these

earbuds are just always with us. The sound can be heard everywhere. They tell us that being in control is paramount. Or that our performance and our schedules are how we should measure our value. They lure us into believing that we have all the answers, and are invisible. Or that the secret to fulfillment is simply on the other side of a transaction. The market masquerades as almighty and everything is a commodity. Even your baptized body and attention. All the while attempting to tell you who you are and who you belong to. A customer to be exploited and you belong to the algorithms. Tempting us to live thus. These liturgies simply lead us to death. Away from community, neighbors, and ourselves.

“Tempted to barter our souls, trading the truth for the power to control.”

Maybe you have been catechized to believe that you are not worthy of love, or you are too young or too old to contribute, or that because your body doesn't fit the mold that society deems as normal you have to shrink back and become more and more invisible.

“Famished for bread when the world offers stone.”

One Lutheran Pastor suggests that temptation or testing (Jesus and ours) is always about identity — about *who* we are and *whose* we are: “Identity. It's always God's first move. At the very start, God has named and claimed us as God's own. But almost immediately, other things try to tell us who we are and to whom we belong: capitalism, the weight-loss industrial complex, our parents, kids at school — they all have a go at telling us who we are. What are your temptations?”

The invitation of Lent is to drop those earbuds. Step out of those liturgies. Renounce and resist those stories that draw you from God, your neighbor, creation and yes, the person you were created to be in baptism.

Hear what catechizes today: “only the God made known in Christ who has already gone to the depths of the grave, preached to those in prison, at the extremes of your life, and has risen again, can tell you who and whose you are.”

Just as Jesus carried the voice and claim of his Father into the heart of temptation, so do we. You are God's beloved. The triune God is well pleased with you. The Spirit of this God resides in you just as the cross forever marks your brow. Nothing can replace that no matter how powerful it might seem.

The angels ministered to Jesus. I'm not sure what they said, but I know what angels disguised as people who have ministered to me in temptation have said. Whether it was a friend, a loved one, or a mentor. Something like: “You are baptized.” “You are called.” “You are not alone.” Through their soundtrack in my ears, things become clear again.

Together, we are angels for one another. Fed with bread that lasts we are sent from this liturgy of life into a world of dead ends and broken promises. What will we resist together? Where is God calling us out so we can walk towards the threshold of new life? Where are springs of water, even now, in the desert of your life?

“When we have struggled and searched through the night, sorting and sifting the wrong from the right, Savior surround us with circles of care, angels of healing, of hope, and of prayer.”