

Because of Jesus: How to be Inspired by God.

By Pastor Kurt Hoover

Litany adapted from Psalm 91

Pastor: He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High,

All: who abides in the shadow of the Almighty,

Pastor: will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress;

All: my God, in whom I trust."

Pastor: For he will give his angels charge of you

All: to guard us in all our ways.

Pastor: On their hands they will bear you up,

All: lest we dash our foot against a stone.

Pastor: Because you are bound to Him in Love

All: Therefore, He will deliver us.

Numbers 22:31-34 ³¹ Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn. So, he bowed low and fell facedown.

³² The angel of the Lord asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. ³³ The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared it."

³⁴ Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, "I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back."

Matthew 4:1-11 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But he answered, "It is written,

'Man shall not live by bread alone,

but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

'He will give his angels charge of you,'

and

‘On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

⁷ Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’” ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; ⁹ and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Begone, Satan! for it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’”

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him.

When are you at your worst? For me it is when I first wake up. I am grumpy, the world owes me, all I want to do is go back to bed. Perhaps at no other time am I am so self-focused and entitled.

What is it for you? Perhaps it is before you have your coffee, how many mugs, and t-shirts have been made from that reality.

I think for many of us we are at our worst when we are hungry. Physically, emotionally – hungry, thirsty. We do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Man can live about forty days without food, about three days without water, about eight minutes without air...but only for one second without hope.

- Hal Lindsey

It is easy to know when you are physically hungry, not as easy to see when you have been spiritually starving.

That is perhaps the more significant part of Jesus experiment in living the human condition for 40 days fasting in the wilderness. It was one thing to go without food for 40 days. It

is another thing all together to go 40 days without words, interaction with another human being. Jesus was starving physically and emotionally, he was at his worst.

What an image. Jesus, experiencing not only what it means to be human, but human reality at our worst... struggling with the devil's temptations.

It is one thing to see the way in which Jesus uses Bible verses, values he has internalized from 30 years of worship... It is one thing to see how Jesus uses scripture to resist the devil's temptations for power, security, fame, the easy route to becoming the famous teacher he had not yet become, much less King of the world ... much less the only thing anyone of us would have cared about in that moment, just one lousy slice of bread.

It is one thing to learn from Jesus example how to muster up in ourselves that same power to resist. It is another thing to notice what happens next.

Jesus allows himself to be ministered to by Angels. Jesus, God in human flesh asked for help! Allowed himself to be helped! That is perhaps the more striking image. Jesus being vulnerable... God needing help...

For us it is easy to relate to being tempted. This is something we go through daily. But when is the last time you were vulnerable? When is the last time you asked for help? When is the last time you accepted someone else well-meaning advice, sympathy or care? ... Jesus let the Angels take care of him. What an image.

And it would not be the last time Jesus does this. Jesus wept, He allowed his emotions to show and he asked for the support of others with his emotional needs. In the Garden just before Judas kisses him on the cheek as his anguish is about to be expressed through tears of blood. He doesn't tough it out on his own, that is what ends up happening, but that was not His plan. He asked the disciples to stay up with Him, He couldn't sleep. *'I am so sad that I feel as if I am dying, stay here and keep awake with me.'* (Matthew 26:38 CEV)

Throughout this season of Lent... I encourage you to watch for the many ways in which Jesus asks for help and make this a season of being vulnerable in your life as well. Allow yourself to be loved, cared for, held. It is not what you do for or give up for God, but what he has done for you!

There was famous Dutch painter, Jan Van Der Meer, which in Holland is the equivalent of being named John Smith... He wasn't so famous for what he painted or even the way he painted but because of how he sold his paintings.

Most artist don't make a living painting or creating what they eventually get know for. Until the invention of the camera most painters got paid for their portrait work rather than say an Alter Piece or the Sistine chapel. Da Vinci's famous masterpiece of the last supper was an experiment in frescoe painting done on the wall of a monastery dining hall, which later became a barn. He didn't make any money on that one and yet it is one of the most reproduced pieces of art in the world. Even if you did get your crack at painting something in a church that thousands would see you still had to paint the *patron* into the scene. Someone had to pay for the work, the paint, the time, take care of artists family.

Having a patron or painting portraits meant you always had someone to please. The constant headache of a portrait painter was that the people getting the painting would always ask for changes after it was finished. ‘My nose is too big; Can you give me a purple dress instead.’

So, this is what Jan Van Der Meer did that not only took care of that problem but made him one of the best-selling painters of his time.

He always left a little bit of the painting unfinished. When the patron came to review the final work, he or she would say, ‘Oh, my you forgot to put the button on that collar.’ The artist would then make a flurry and say, ‘Oh. My, I can’t believe I missed that. What a great eye you have.’ He then would paint in the button while the patron stood there. The effect was that the patrons felt that they had made a significant contribution to the piece. They then took ownership and bought the painting without making other adjustments.

*You might think that was kind of manipulative, but really it was genius. He was in effect, asking for help. People were so glad to give that they left feeling wonderful, while he was left feeling richer in every way. **

How is it that God is inviting you to be a part of what he is doing in the world? Is there a part of your life that he is still working on? Is there something he is waiting for you to be vulnerable enough to ask for help with?

When is the last time you prayed for God’s angels ‘to have charge over you,’ and meant it?

Have you ever been ministered to by Angels as Jesus was in the wilderness? What does that look like? How do you let an Angel care for you? Have you ever had the experience of Balaam when God had to step in and get your attention?

The word Angel (both in Hebrew and Greek) is very different than what we have made it to be in the English translation. We picture the angel in white flowing gowns, with wings and halos, which it might very well be, and it might very well have been like for the many

The Greek, uses the word *angellos*, referring God's messenger, OR more precisely to the container for God's message. Not something you can offend or upset, but literally whatever it looks like when God speaks to you. Probably very beautiful, like an angel.

We use this sense of an angel when we refer to a nurse or a caregiver as an angel... a vessel for God's seemingly direct work in the world.

Can you picture Jesus in the wilderness experiencing some of our temptations for fame and security, short cuts or simply an end to the hunger? Are you hungry? Spiritually hungry?

Can you picture Jesus being cared for by angels? More importantly can you picture yourself being cared for?

What an image? How do you let an Angel have charge of you? Have you ever experienced this? I contest that you indeed have, even just this day... But what does it look like and how do we do it?

We ask God for help? We stop living by only the bread that we can provide for ourselves. We come to the end of self the end of our own abilities and we ask God for Help. The moment you ask another person for help or accept another's gracious service or gift... you have been ministered to by angels! And think about this ...Angels sent by God himself to care for you!!

Watch of it this season... Jesus' vulnerability.

*Jesus spoke the truth at all times so that people could trust Him. His willingness to ask for help ... to show vulnerability ... is yet another reason people were so willing to follow him. He indicated that he had a need for them in His life, and that allowed them the terrific feeling of being needed. **

The pain that is your life will never be finished until made complete on the other side of the resurrection. Who is it that God is using right now in your life? Will you let them help?

* Laurie Beth Jones. *Jesus, Life Coach*. Thomas Nelson. Nashville (2004).

