

LENT: WILDERNESS

February 22, 2026

Preaching: Michael Swartzentruber, Senior Minister



MATTHEW 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
2 He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. 3 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, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."' 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you",

and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." '

7 Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." '

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; 9 and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.'

10 Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

"Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." '

11 Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. The devil lays a bet that Jesus will jump at the chance for glory, fame, and the quick fix. What are the temptations you experience that promise your life should be more special, perfect, or complete than it currently is?
3. This story shows us how scripture can be used to build up or to tear down. How have you experienced scripture used as a weapon to hurt or harm?
4. Have you ever fasted? Why did you do it? What did you experience or

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learn? If you are fasting or practising Lent in some way this year, how is it going?

Refer to the Lent Guide at southelkhorncc.org/lent to get ideas on how to creatively engage this season.

5. Jesus was tempted after fasting and prayer. The spiritual journey in the wilderness strengthened him for the time of trial. What spiritual practices strengthen you?
6. Jesus resists an immediate, miraculous fix to securing food. He doesn't give in to anxiety about having 'enough' and instead trusts God to be enough. How do you struggle with this temptation to secure 'enough' (fun, finances, facts, friends, etc.)? What can you learn from Jesus?
7. Jesus is tempted with his own gifts (later, he will make bread for a whole hungry crowd). How might our very gifts also be our greatest traps?

RESOURCES FOR LENT

South Elkhorn's Lent Guide provides a brief overview of Lent and Ash Wednesday, and provides ideas on how you might practice and experience Lent. A printed version is available in the foyer, or you can view and download online using the QR code or the link below:



southelkhorncc.org/Lent

On the webpage above, you can also find a **Digital Fast** along with worship services, fellowship opportunities, and special gatherings during the Lenten Season.



Lenten Devotional

Weekly Devotional with scripture, poetry, images, and reflections.

Walk through these weekly readings and prompts at your own pace throughout the season of Lent. May the art, reflections, poetry, and journaling allow you to wander and wonder your way through the wilderness, which is always where Lent begins.

Listen Online

Sermon audio available at southelkhorncc.org/sermons