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## **The Temptations and the Revealing of the Source of all Life**

In the name of God, Abba Imma, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Hebrew former slaves had passed through the waters of the Red Sea. And God understood they needed time to rest and recover from centuries of abuse, and degradation, and trauma. So, it wasn't until a year later that God lead them to the edge of the Promised Land. They sent in spies to get advanced reports. Two came back and said, 'It's wonderful!' Ten of them came back and said, 'It's hideous! We should run now. It's our last chance to escape.'

And they subverted the destiny of the people with an epidemic of fear. They blinded the people to God, and to God's vision. And God banished them to the desert for another 39 years.

I sense most of us feel like we are inside the waters of the Red Sea these days--mountains of water on either side of us--pandemic, Ukraine, racism, the suffering of our own families, eco-disasters. Will they all crash upon us? And there is no future, no Promised Land for us.

Jesus was in the desert 40 days, fasting. This was the culmination of his spiritual quest. It went on throughout the hidden years of his life, adolescence, and his twenties, arriving at this moment where the temptations actually appear to be 'career options'.

Think about this now--*Hey, have I got a deal for you!*--except that the temptations are insidious, because they are so subtle, just a slight, fatal, distortion of Jesus' mission.

*'Couldn't you... turn stones into bread? People like to eat, people need to eat, and you're good at this! Why, I bet you could feed 5,000 people at one sitting. Yeah--we could open a franchise on the side. What do you think? What do you think?'*

And Jesus says, 'Life must be lived at a whole 'nother level. It is the Spirit within and the Spirit beyond who leads us to the fullness of the life that we need, the glory of the human being that is fully alive. It's not good enough, bread alone. The material world will never satisfy you. It's a grand and seemingly endless delusion.'

So he??[the Devil] takes him up to a high place--I think it's the Salesforce Tower, or is it in Dubai? You know..the panoramic view! *Whoa, all at your feet. It's magnificent--and I'll give it to you if you just, you know, bow down a little bit towards me here because it is mine to give, you know.) All the power, all the corruption that comes with it. You can have all the glory. People will praise you because you're somebody; you've got authority in the world. And people love authorities, you know. People love to be lackeys, you know that, don't you? Oh, it's all yours. (Got any takers here?)*

Jesus tells his disciples, 'If you want to be great, become a servant of all. Bow down only to God.'

So they go up to the Temple peak, and the Devil says,  
*'Couldn't you just jump off? I know, I know, it's a little showy, but hasn't God promised to protect us always? Shouldn't we trust God?'*

No one has ever seen God. It is the great work of Jesus to draw out the hidden, unfathomable, God--the Abba Imma, the father/mother, source of all life--Jesus reveals in the course of his lifetime and teachings. The Source, this unending, generative Source, unparalleled compassion, mercy, wisdom, grace, forgiving endlessly, even to the wicked. This God who lives in deepest intimacy with Jesus.

'Abba Imma and I are one, but never exclusive.' This is the great beckoning of Jesus' entire ministry: 'Won't you join me in that intimacy with God so that we can practice the mercy that this world needs? Will you open your hearts? Will you connect with me in the joy, like the blossoms of the tree? Will you come to life--to bless, and bless, and bless, and bless without ending?'

Jesus did not come to make life bearable, he came to draw us into that communion upon which all life depends--so that life might flourish in the desert, in exile, in the prison, as a refugee, wherever we find ourselves, [that] we might come to life in the one who believes in our lives more than we do.

And so we are asked this day to remember, where you??[we] came from?  
Remember, who is with us.  
Remember, we dare not live from an epidemic of fear.  
Remember, our destiny is God.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

The peace, which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.  
Amen.