

There could not be no greater goal then to end the bloody slaughter of young men. And in this, both the Democrats and the Republicans shared similar values. In the battle for territorial and economic power, Americans were killing Americans in what is reputed to be the bloodiest, most brutal, most barbaric civil war in the history of humankind. Regardless of the origin, or the reasons behind the war, both political parties in the United States in the mid 19th century wanted the same thing – end the war that was killing thousands of young men.

Beleaguered and beaten, bereft of replacement soldiers and running out of munitions, the south was ready to embark on an immediate peace process, and the conservative Republicans were very interested in teaming with the Democrats to make it happen. In fact, word of a delegation from the south waiting to make the generous and dangerous journey north to talk, was beginning to filter through the offices of the House of Representatives.

The problem? A negotiated peace would mean the retention of slavery. According to the story, President Lincoln had the same goal, to end the war. However, he wanted to meet this goal with a different strategy, and with an even greater outcome. It was no easy task. He wanted his secretary of state to negotiate, to bribe, to do whatever means necessary to get a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote in the House of Representatives to pass the 13th amendment of the constitution of the United States. This amendment would give Congress power over all states, to enforce a nationwide law abolishing slavery.

The south was fighting for economic and political autonomy and entitlement to their holdings, including their slaves. An amendment to abolish slavery would render the war irrelevant and the fighting would very quickly end. Both solutions had the same immediate result – ending the war. The more difficult solution, requiring the full weight of presidential power, and the full maneuvering of presidential strategy was historic, making Abraham Lincoln the most revered president in the history of the United States.

Both solutions had the same immediate result. Representatives of both solutions quoted the scriptures and assumed the authority of God's will. Both solutions presented viable options from which any leader would have garnered tremendous political cache. According to Lincoln, only one of the solutions was the "right" solution. How many have seen Lincoln? I think Daniel Day-Lewis was incredible, but like Meryl Streep in Iron Lady, they each gave Oscar winning performances in movies that were

dull, slow moving, and boring. And I loved Sally Field as Lincoln's grieving wife. But those are just my opinions.

In the story we heard from scripture this morning, Jesus is presented with viable options for his leadership. Fresh from his baptism experience, and filled with an empowered Spirit, in a wilderness time, a time of wrestling with good decisions, Jesus considers how he will step into leadership. And what's really interesting is that all of the options can be supported by scripture. Both the tempter and Jesus quote old testament lessons to support their perspectives.

The first temptation is economic freedom. Turn these stones to bread. Jesus considers the incredible power that comes with economic freedom. Think of the things he can do when he has no financial pressures. The problem is that economic freedom becomes the agenda and not what you can do with that freedom in healing the world.

The second temptation is popularity. All the glory and adoration of all the kingdoms will be yours. Think of all the good decisions he can make, and all the people he can help when nothing stands in the way of his authority. Hitler had this kind of authority. This kind of unchecked authority leads to all manner of corruption and abuse.

The final temptation in the story is power. Throw yourself off this high pinnacle and the angels will protect you. Think of what Jesus could do when he used his own power to help people. Shakespeare said power corrupts...absolute power corrupts absolutely.

All three are good options for leadership. All three are defensible through scripture. All three ways of leading have the potential of a good result. But all three ways of being represent the former way of doing things, and put the outcome into the unpredictable and unreliable hands of human endeavour. Quoting scripture, Jesus suggests that there is only one way for leadership and that is spirit led, God empowered, God centered. In our ministry planning workshop yesterday, where we brought the best of our intentions to the work of program planning for next year, one participant reminded us that God is the master planner.

As we enter this season of Kenosis, we are going to come face to face with the discipline of emptying, wondering how we let go of the former way of influencing decisions and setting direction. We will come face to face with the question of putting all our trust in the empowering Spirit who calls us to be different. We must let go before we can be open to that which is new. The journey is before us. May we be filled with courage and may the journey be filled with grace. Amen.