

Feb. 14, 2016 Luke 4:1-13. Lent I

Last Saturday morning Vicki went down to do a load of laundry not realizing that she and I were soon to enter into a ***Jesus in the desert*** experience.

An hour later, she discovered that our wonderful, less than a year old washing machine was not draining and had timed out. So she put it on drain again. Not quite twenty minutes later, same timed out response. Vicki realized that since mid-January it has been taking longer and longer to complete a wash. Sometimes the machine would even stop in mid-cycle and need to be restarted.

With 5 piles of dirty laundry at her feet, Vicki ***'called'*** me to come down into this unexpected yet growing desert of despair and help out. First, we found the manual for the old machine which wasn't very helpful. The temperature rose and the desert wind began to blow. Eventually, through the shimmering heat the manual for the new machine was located.

It told us to check the waste hose for clogs or kinks. That was difficult, because our waste hook up is inside the wall and the washer was full of water and pinned between the wash tub and the dryer. The desert winds now began to howl and so did one of us.

But finally we got the hose unhooked, and junk came rolling out. However we soon realized that there wasn't enough crud to account for a blockage or enough water flow to account for a clear passageway. So I got out my mighty shop-vac (What's a guy without his shop-vac!) and started sucking the daylight out of the waste hose and the machine began to spin. Great! Relief from the now noon day desert sun.

But Vicki wasn't so sure the problem was fixed. She wanted to be certain, so over my objections she put the machine back into another rinse and spin cycle.

Yup, it timed out again. The problem had not been solved.

In the increasing heat of this day we were not prepared to live by dirty clothes alone, so we sought out the manual once more.

The next step, the manual informed us, was "***call a repairman.***" We resisted this temptation for we were not prepared to worship at the expensive altar of a Saturday service call. At least not yet. You might say, a little bit of greed was holding us back.

So, back to the manual. We read a little farther in the book and found out that there was a debris filter located in the corner of the machine.

Now, Vicki and I are of a generation where all washing machines are serviced from the back. Up until recently, virtually all home models were top load washers. So with much effort, we pulled the water filled machine farther from the wall. Vicki climbed over the wash tub and into the cramped space behind, that just allowed her to squat in one position.

By the way, you should know that this desert experience really deepened for her since she sometimes suffers from claustrophobia. She was getting close to putting God to the test. I on the other hand suffer from terminal impatience with inanimate objects, and was getting just plain testy, So we were very tempted to be less than our best selves in this growing desert experience.

The picture in the manual showed a square box at the bottom corner behind which a round debris filter could be accessed. Squatting in the cramped space looking around her knees, Vicki couldn't find the square box, but did find a round black plug.

It had to be the right thing because I kept telling her it was! After all; everyone knows, all washing machines are serviced from the back.

So Vicki pried the plug out and found nothing!

She pulled herself up so as to turn in the other direction, squatted again and found another round black plug in the other corner. This was not the right thing either. In fact, there were 4 plugs which had nothing to do with the drain.

With my help, she climbed out from behind the machine, attempting not to knock herself out on the cupboards above her head or fall as she stepped in and out of the laundry tub and down to the floor. You have heard the old saying going where angels fear to tread. Well one of us was going there.

Now, what started as a regular, Saturday morning, load of laundry, which became a somewhat interesting exploration of the workings of our almost new, washing machine, had now turned into a desert of total frustration. The temptation of entitlement was gathering around us.

“Why does this have to happen to us?”

Why can't we just drink our coffee and read the newspaper like we want to?

Why don't these new machines work like the old ones?!”

Still fighting the temptation to call the overpriced repairman, we looked at the manual again. It now became obvious that the rectangular door was on the front of the unit, even though I had already seen it and dismissed it as a misplaced logo. To be fair, I dismissed it because everyone knows; everything should be accessed from the back of the washing machine. All washing machines are serviced from the back. Right!

After all that cramped squirming behind the machine you know who was now hungry for more than a loaf of bread, my blood would do just fine. In fact I was sorely tempted to call upon some serious angel intervention.

Well anyway we managed to go forward with this new plan "C". I pried open the door and lo and behold, there was the drain tube and a twist out debris filter just like in the picture. Who would have thought to put a drain filter so conveniently located at the front so you wouldn't have to move a machine full of water?!

I knelt down aware of my need for a penance and pulled the drain plug. The water was soon emptied and I pulled out the drain filter. It was plugged like you wouldn't believe.

Vicki took it over to the sink and began cleaning off the junk and pulling out what she thought was the filter inside. But, it wasn't a filter. It was a premi - baby sock, a precious remnant of a post-Christmas visit.

Our cranky frustrations, our greedy resistance, and our temptations of entitlement and calling upon the angel armies melted in a moment as Vicki held up this precious symbol of **love**. All our upset just vanished like a mirage. Love now filled us.

In the blink of an eye, we were out of the desert and rejoicing in the Promised Land.

In a few minutes the filter was replaced: The machine moved back to the wall and the load of laundry was spinning around once more.

First Application for Lent:

Let the signs and symbols of **love** overcome the temptations in life because they can!

P.S. Not all washing machines are serviced from the back.