

## What do you want to be known for (2018)

### First Sunday in Lent - Feb. 18 2018

#### Luke 4:1-13

On Friday evening, at the end of a difficult week,  
for our church family, for our nation,  
David and I flopped down on the couch, picked up the remote,  
and did what we hadn't yet done this month —  
watch the Olympics.  
And it was kind of just what we needed —  
to watch young people pouring all of themselves into achieving excellence,  
creating beauty,  
reaching heights never before reached.  
That was actually exactly what we did see — heights reached as never before.  
We were watching men's figure skating,  
and out onto the rink skated Nathan Chen.  
The commentator explained, helpfully for us ignorant folks,  
that Nathan Chen is known for his quads.  
I briefly thought she meant his quadriceps, but his thighs didn't appear to be  
abnormal.  
No, it's his quadruple jumps — his astonishing ability to leap into the air and in  
less than a second turn his body around four times.  
And then, of course, land back on his skates and not fall down —  
the really amazing part.  
So we watched as he skated —  
first one quad jump, then another — then he was at five,  
and then, unexpectedly, he threw in a sixth that wasn't planned.  
It was dazzling.  
The announcer was so incredibly excited at the end that she blurted out:  
"He did it! Nathan Quad did it! Wait, I mean Nathan **Chen**! Whatever!"  
"Might as well call him Nathan Quad," said the other announcer, "because this  
is what he'll always be known for. Quads."

It's true. No matter what Nathan Chen does now, if he drops out of figure skating and starts selling used cars, truth is he's always going to be the Guy who did the Quads. It's what he'll be known for.

A couple decades ago, a business guru launched the concept of personal branding — personal branding.

That is to say: what are you known for?

What do people think of when they think of you?

And he urged people to constantly be thinking about their personal brand, what it is they want to be known for.

Nathan Chen's pretty well branded now.

But most folks don't have a dazzling Olympic career to define them: for most people,

it's a question they have to return to again and again

as they transition from one job to another, from one part of life to another — what do I want to be known for?

what's my personal brand?

Jesus of Nazareth was about two thousand years too early for anyone to talk 'personal branding' with him .

But today's scripture passage finds him pondering that same question: *What do you want to be known for?*

The story shows us Jesus at the very beginning of it all, the beginning of his ministry, anyhow.

The last thing we've heard about him was when he was 12, and hanging out in the temple at Jerusalem talking to the priests.

Now he's 30ish, with a lot of years of carpentry behind him,

and he emerges onto the scene at the River Jordan, where he asks John the Baptist to baptize him, too,

and then, it says, then he goes off into the wilderness.

Why? hard to know. But it looks like he just needs some time to figure out who he's supposed to be.

And here's where the story gets a little strange.

After 40 days out there, it says, Jesus gets a visit from the Devil, from Satan.

And Satan has an offer for Jesus, actually several offers.

"You're pretty hungry out here, aren't you?" Satan starts out.

"Not much to eat out here in the desert.

Why don't you take care of yourself?

Why don't you use those powers of yours to turn these stones into bread?

I know you can do it."

And Jesus looks him in the eye and says,

"nope, not going to do that –

remember, scripture says 'man does not live by bread alone.'"

"All right," says Satan, "fair enough. Forget about bread.

I've got a better offer for you anyhow."

And he leads Jesus up to a high place, it says,

and shows him all the kingdoms of the world.

"These are pretty much under my control right now," Satan says, "but I'd be glad to share with you.

All this can be yours, with just one tiny requirement –

You'll need to worship **me**, not that God of yours."

"Hmmm," says Jesus. "Thanks, but no thanks.

May I remind you of another piece of scripture, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.""

"That's some impressive bible-quoting," says Satan. "You obviously paid attention in religious school all those years.

Now I've got some scripture for you," he says.

And he takes Jesus up to the top of the temple of Jerusalem,  
and says, “Remember that passage in the Psalms that says “God will  
command his angels to bear you up?”

How about this – how about you jump right now,  
off the top of this temple.

See all those people below?

When they see God’s angels grabbing hold of you in mid-air, think how  
impressed they’ll be.

Come on, go for it. Show them what you’ve got.”

And Jesus shakes his head, and says,

“Here’s my last scripture for you, Satan:

“do not put the Lord your God to the test.””

And with that, the story says, Satan disappears – at least for now.

It’s a strange story, no question — asking you to picture Jesus and Satan  
flying through the air together,  
looking over the kingdoms of the world.

But don’t get hung up on that — what the story is really trying to tell us is that  
right at the start of his ministry,

right at the start of his job,

Jesus was really wrestling,

Jesus was really struggling with who he was,

and who God wanted him to be,

really agonizing over that question of What do I want to be known for?

What do I want to be known for ...

Because the temptations were very, very real:

to use his power, his gifts, all for himself.

Turn these stones to bread, said the tempter, take care of yourself first.

Be the King of the world — all you have to do is turn your back on God.

Dazzle everybody, said that sneaky evil voice — do something spectacular,  
jump off the temple and fly through the air — everyone will love you.

Everyone!

But from deep within Jesus' spirit there comes another voice, and it says,  
 "is that what you want to be known for?"  
 And it's not. It's not what he want to be known for.  
 And Jesus says to Satan, buzz off.  
 And he walks out of the wilderness,  
 and offers to others not stones turned to bread, but the living bread of his own  
 life —  
 not a kingdom of this world, but the kingdom of God,  
 not magic tricks, but miracles of healing and hope and life.  
 This, Jesus says, this is what I want to be known for.

So what do you want to be known for?  
 This story, this story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness is the traditional  
 first scripture of Lent,  
 because Lent is the time when we're supposed to be asking ourselves what  
 Jesus had to ask himself:  
 What do we want to be known for?  
 And what God hopes for us is what God hoped for Jesus in the wilderness:  
 that we come out in the right place.  
 That we choose to be known for love.  
 And for courage.  
 That we choose to be known for our faithfulness,  
 and for our unending hope.  
 That we choose to be known for the strength of our character,  
 for the choices we made for what is right and true and lasting.

This past Wednesday, two calendar days came together in one  
 for the first time in decades:  
 Valentine's day, a celebration of love,  
 landed on Ash Wednesday, a day of contemplation and humility.  
 And on that same day,  
 teens and adults in a school in Parkland, Florida were mowed down by bullets

in a terrifying scene that we have seen too many times.

On that day that honored love,

on that day of humility and prayer,

there was terror and death —

but there was also love, and there was also courage, and there was also strength — and humility.

I'm going to tell you a name —

and I want you to remember this name, because the man who bore this name is a man who knew what he wanted to be known for.

And what he will always be known for is Love.

Aaron Feis.

Aaron Feis was a football coach at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

He also helped out as a part-time security guard, patrolling the halls, keeping an eye out.

And when the shooter entered the high school, when the bullets came raining down,

Aaron Feis didn't think twice.

Aaron Feis stepped into the line of fire, put his body between the bullets and the children; used his very self to shield the students behind him.

They lived.

He died for them. He died loving them.

"He died the same way he lived," a fellow teacher said,

"He put himself second."

My friend Brian Erickson, a pastor in Atlanta, responded to Parkland by simply posting a picture of Aaron Feis on his Facebook page.

And below the picture of Aaron Feis, Brian wrote this:

"This is what real power looks like," he wrote.

"**This** is the face of the world I choose to live in."

Because Aaron Feis chose what he wanted to be known for.  
In that split second when the choice was put before him,  
he chose to be known for love, courageous love, sacrificial love.

In the days and weeks and months ahead,  
we will struggle as a country to choose what we want to be known for,  
what we will be known for.

And I pray that we will make God-given choices.

But on a personal level, on an individual level,  
we have every day — today, tomorrow, and forever,  
days in which to make that choice:

what will be known for?

what are the choices that we make?

And for our guide, we look to Jesus,  
who out in that wilderness, wrestling with temptation,  
chose love and goodness over all else.

That's what he chose to be known for.

May his choice be our own, this day and every day.

Amen.