

The First Sunday in Lent

Text: Luke 4:1-13 (NIV)

¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, ²where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. ³The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” ⁴Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone.’” ⁵The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷So if you worship me, it will all be yours.” ⁸Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’” ⁹The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰For it is written: “‘He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; ¹¹ they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” ¹²Jesus answered, “It says: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ¹³When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.



Theme: When It Comes to Temptation, Remember that You Are not Jesus

When Jesus gave us the Lord’s Prayer, He taught us to pray, “And lead us not into temptation.” But how often don’t we willingly walk right into temptation. I have a test question in confirmation, which says, “If we pray, ‘But deliver us from evil,’ and then we willingly enter a situation with a lot of temptation (such as go to a party with alcohol), will that prayer serve as insurance that we don’t fall into sin there?” You would not believe how often the kids answer that this prayer will help. It’s our insurance against falling into temptation when we enter a situation with a lot of temptation. The answer is “no!” We should always stay as far away from temptation as possible! When it comes to temptation, it is not something that we should battle as Jesus did. We are always cowards who run!

I. Jesus was led into temptation as a warrior who battled the devil himself.

He was filled with the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness, but He was also filled with the Holy Spirit as He battled the devil. The Judges in the Old Testament, such as Ehud, Deborah, Gideon or Sampson, were people who were filled with the Holy Spirit to do battle against the enemies of God’s people. David also went before Goliath in the name of the Lord. Now Jesus went with the Spirit and power of God as He battled the devil himself.

The devil battled hard against him. He used Jesus’ greatest weakness at the time. Jesus had fasted for 40 days, and the devil used that weakness to tempt Him with bread. Jesus’ first miracle would not have been to help others, but to help Himself. He lied to Jesus. He told Him that the whole world had been given to him, and he had the authority to give it to anyone that he pleased. The devil was never given the world. He tried to steal it. Jesus was tempted to take the easy way out. He could have the whole world if He would just bow down and worship the devil. That is what the devil craved ever since his rebellion, that God would have to bow to him. The final temptation is especially

interesting. If Jesus' Father really loved Him, He would not allow His Son to die, even if He through Himself down from the highest point of the temple. How could Jesus' Father ever allow Him to die, but that was His Father's will in the end. The devil tempted Jesus as hard as he could...

But Jesus left the devil defeated. He defended Himself from every temptation with the world of God. His thoughts remained pure. His aim stayed on that cross where He would bear all of our sins. But this didn't mean that the devil would never return. Sometimes he would be even more sinister by working through Jesus' own disciples. When Peter said that Jesus should never go to the cross, Jesus said, "*Get thee behind me satan!*" When Jesus was on the cross, the devil tried with all of his might to get Jesus to come down. He was working through all of those people who mocked Jesus and challenged Him to come down from the cross. In all of these temptations, the devil tried to get Jesus to doubt His Father's love, but He never did. He clung in faith to His Father right to the bitter end when He said, "*Father into Your hands I commend My Spirit.*" Jesus battled valiantly against all of the devil's temptations and won. He never failed even one time.

II. However, we are not called to battle temptation.

It is a battle that we will always lose. You can think of several examples of that in the Bible. When Eve was tempted, she took a better look at the fruit. It looked pretty good, so she ate some of it, and even gave some to her husband. When David saw Bathsheba bathing on her roof, he called her over to the palace. Before you knew it, a child was on the way. Jesus never told Peter to follow Him to the courtyard of the high priest and hang around the enemies of our Lord, but Peter thought that he would remain strong. Before he knew it, he had denied his Lord three times. The same exact thing will happen to us. When we take a better look at temptation, when we bring it near to us or put ourselves in a place where we shouldn't be, we will fall every time, just as these people did. There might be some times when we succeed for a while. We begin to pat ourselves on the back that we are doing pretty well, and before we know it, we have fallen too. The devil never gives up on us. He always waits for another opportune time when he can pounce on his prey.

When it comes to temptation, we should all be cowards. Here are four important Bible verses, which tell of the importance of fleeing temptation:

- 1 Corinthians 6:18, "Flee sexual immorality!"
- 1 Corinthians 10:14, "Flee from idolatry."
- 1 Timothy 6:11, "Flee from [the love of money.]"
- 2 Timothy 2:22, "Flee the evil desires of your youth."

Not one of those verses tell us to stand up and fight against temptation like a man! They all tell us to get out of there. The Bible even tells us to be careful when we think that we are standing firm, because that is surely the time when we will fall. (1 Cor 10:12) We all need to be like Joseph, who when confronted with temptation from Potiphar's wife said, "*How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?*" and he ran away. (Gen 39:9) Don't be engaged with temptation long enough for it to drag you down.

III. When you do fail, trust in Christ, who won the victory for you.

This lenten season in our Wednesday evening services, we will be looking at men who failed again and again. I found six examples in Luke 22 of how the disciples fell into temptation. One of them went down in defeat. The other 11 prevailed even though they had fallen into temptation. When Judas returned the money to the chief priests, he confessed, *"I have betrayed innocent blood."* They answered, *"That's your responsibility."* He went out and killed himself. The other disciples also confessed their sin and guilt, but they also believed Jesus' words, *"Peace be with you."* They came to trust that Jesus paid for their sins on the cross. They found joy and peace in the forgiveness of sins that Christ had won for them. He had redeemed them from their sins.

The name "satan" means accuser. The devil is very sly. After he leads us into temptation, then he really gets to work. He reminds us how bad we are. He accuses us with such things as, "And you call yourself a Christian!" How could God ever love you after what you have done?" Confess your sin, but leave it at the cross of Christ. God will silence the devil Himself. There is now no condemnation for all who are in Christ Jesus. Our sins are all completely forgiven. We are clothed with the pure righteousness of Jesus Christ. In baptism God gives us a rebirth as His dear children and heirs of His heavenly kingdom.

Never think that you are strong enough to fight off temptation. It will win every time. Get out of there whenever you are tempted. When the devil does win a battle with temptation, don't let him win the victory for your soul. Christ didn't take the easy way out. He bore the cross, so that you could live with Him in glory forever. Trust in that salvation, and you will have the victory that He won for you with His perfect life, innocent death, and glorious resurrection.

Amen.

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