

Luke 4:1-13

March 13, 2019

“Faithful in All Thy Ways”

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Wednesday after the 1st Sunday in Lent

Vicar Otterman

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, Our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

[Introduction]

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

Our Gospel reading from Luke is meant to remind us of two other stories in the Bible. The story of the temptation in the Garden of Eden and the story of Israel in the wilderness

Both of these stories are featured as key moments when God’s people listened to the temptations of the devil and turned away from God.

Tempting God’s people is one of the devil’s favorite games to play. God created Adam and Eve to be the crown of creation. He made Israel to be his chosen people. He established King David so that his lineage would reign forever. And as soon as God looked upon them with his favor, the devil went to work to see how he could break what God was building. He tempted them to abandon God’s Word and listen to his lies instead.

So when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan river and God proclaimed, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased,” the devil was ready with his old tricks to deceive yet another one of God’s servants into betraying Him.

[1st Temptation]

At the end of his 40 days in the wilderness, Jesus was hungry, and Satan swept in with his first temptation. “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.”

This is not the first time Satan has tempted with food. When he approached Adam and Eve in the garden, he tempted them with the fruit of the forbidden tree, telling them that it would open their eyes and make them like God, knowing good and evil. Because of that lie, they saw that the fruit was desirable and ate it. (*Genesis 3:5-6*)

And In the wilderness, while Israel was following God’s cloud from place to place, they became hungry, and they believed the lie that they had been led out of Egypt only to die of hunger and thirst. (*Exodus 16:3; 17:3*)

But when the devil tempted Jesus with hunger, he did not succumb. Instead, he quoted scripture and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’”

It wasn’t that Jesus was not allowed to miraculously make bread. As we know, he created bread for thousands of people on at least two separate occasions. But Jesus served God in His timing and His purposes. When he made bread, it was to serve others, not to serve himself.

[2nd Temptation]

So then the devil took Jesus up to a high place and showed him all the kingdoms of the earth and told him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.”

Just like when Satan tempted Adam and Eve with the thought that they could have authority and glory like God, he tempts Jesus with a similar promise that he would be ruler over all the nations.

But Jesus trusted in the will of his Father in heaven. Again he responded by quoting scripture, saying, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’”

It’s not that Jesus wasn’t supposed to be given all authority one day. After all, when he was raised from the dead, Jesus tells the disciples that he has been given “all authority in heaven and on earth.” (*Matthew 28:18*)

But the devil wanted Jesus to take a shortcut. He wanted him to give into instant gratification. But unlike Adam, Jesus trusted in his Father’s will, even if that meant he would have to suffer first.

[3rd Temptation]

Then the devil grew tired of being thwarted by scripture, so he took Jesus to a pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem and quoted scripture himself, saying, ““If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

Jesus saw how the devil was twisting God’s Word, so he quoted scripture back to him, saying, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test,’” Jesus was referring back to the time when Israel put God to the test in the wilderness, where they were thirsty and asked, “Is the LORD among us or not?” (*Exodus 17:7*)

[Satan Is Thwarted]

Then the devil left, having been thwarted at every turn. His old tricks did not work on Jesus. This time he could not tempt God’s servant into turning against Him. He would have to try a different strategy, so Satan left and waited for an opportune time to strike again. The next time we see him reappear in Luke’s Gospel is right before the passion, where it says, “Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them.” (*Luke 22:3-4*)

The devil’s new strategy was to kill Jesus. Eliminating God’s faithful servant would have to do. After all, it would still be an effective way of destroying God’s plans for redemption.

Or would it?

Jesus bested the devil when he came to tempt him, and he beat him again when he came to kill him. Where we fall, Jesus stood firm. Where we die, Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus was strong where we were weak. Before him Satan cannot be victorious.

[Conclusion]

Jesus did what we could not, but where does that leave us? To find out, we can turn once more to Luke’s Gospel where Satan is mentioned by name once more. When Jesus foretold Peter that he would deny him three times, Jesus said to Peter,

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” (*Luke 22:31-32*)

Even though Satan was beaten by Jesus, he still demanded to have what belonged to him. Like Peter, Satan accuses each one of us of being guilty under God’s Law, and he demands to have us for himself. But through the gift of the Holy Spirit, Jesus gives us faith, so the devil cannot have us.

Jesus endured temptation, suffering, and death on our behalf, so that he could save us from the grip of the devil to whom all sinners belong. And now that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to him, he prays continually on our behalf like he did for Peter, forgiving our sins, granting us faith, and rescuing us from the hand of Satan. And for that reason, even during this season of lent, we can rejoice! Amen.

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
