

March 6, 2022
First Sunday in Lent
Luke 4:1-13

In Luke's Gospel there is a progression in the temptations Satan puts before Jesus in the wilderness. But first make sure to note two things about this temptation. First, it is the Father's will that Jesus undergo this temptation. It is the Holy Spirit that brings Jesus out to fast and be tempted. Second, this is starkly different from the temptations you and I face. We are crippled by a sinful nature; almost victims of sin and Satan's temptations are a blight that afflict us. Jesus has no sin or sinful nature in His being. He is here doing battle on our behalf, resisting temptation in order to live a perfect human life that His human righteousness would be imputed to us as He then takes our sin to His cross.

I do think it is helpful though to note how Satan goes about trying to trip Jesus up in His humanity with these temptations.

Satan starts by hitting Jesus where He is lacking something—namely food. We're told that Jesus ate nothing at all for those forty days and then—massive understatement—He was hungry. So that's where the devil starts. But remember, it is God's will that Jesus suffer want. Jesus defeats Satan by standing in the will of God and citing "*It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'*" That verse Jesus cites from Deuteronomy continues, "*but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*"

I'm not trying to give you a recipe for how to defeat temptation by spouting Bible verses here. But check your general perspective. We are kind of spoiled. So often when we face some type of lack or want in life, we almost see it as some type of injustice against us. That's a really bad mindset for the Christian because over and over again Jesus and the apostles state in the New Testament, God's Word, that we may have to sacrifice in living out our faith in love, may suffer for Christ's sake in faith, how our walk in Christ is picking up a cross and following. God's Word

spells out plainly this is a broken world of suffering, sorrow, injustice and want, but our victory in Christ is enduring in faith through it into His everlasting glory.

Simply put, God's will may be that you suffer want...and if so, it's for your good! It was the Father's will for the Son, and as a redeemed son or daughter of God it may very well be His blessed will for you. Don't bicker against God. Remember the promise of God guaranteed by Christ's victory for you!

The second temptation moves from the lack in the world that causes suffering, to the riches of the world that often causes covetous desire. Satan is pretty much saying that he will give Jesus the world if only he will toss aside the true God and worship Satan instead.

Now there are all sorts of questions raised here; does Satan really own the world to give? Jesus is true God Himself, so isn't it kind of silly to bring up him worshiping another? But let's remember that Jesus also has a fully human nature...and the world sure seems to have a lot of appeal for human beings, doesn't it? Every other human being seems to fall for this temptation, so why wouldn't Satan try it out?

Jesus simply states Scriptural fact: *"The Lord your God you shall worship and him only shall you serve."*

Again I appeal to what this says about our mindset. Is prosperity, riches, worldly ambition our first priority? Especially in our first-world American lives, we need to be careful which God we're actually serving and make sure it's not the world that Satan is offering.

I know folks hate stewardship sermons, but Jesus preached quite plainly: *"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* Yet when a preacher brings up the idea of tithing, and in this case I'm meaning 10% of your gross income going to the church, so many Christians respond at least inwardly, "There's no way I can afford that!" Maybe that's true. But ask yourself this: Is it true

because of necessity, or because you've filled your life up with so much of the worldly and material things first, that the leftovers for God are meager?

Sorry if that one stings, but it's the truth. The worldly and material is one of the greatest false gods in Satan's arsenal of temptation, and we need to beware. Our mindset must be God first, above ALL things.

The last temptation moves from the things of the world directly to the human relationship with God. This one echoes from Satan's interaction with Eve in Eden, "Did God really say..." as if God's Word can be of doubt. Jesus' will have none of it. God's Word is true. *"You shall not put the Lord your God to the test."*

In our fallen state we're going to doubt. It's just going to happen sometimes. But again, in our Christian mindset we should not willingly allow doubts about God to become acceptable. Yet we do. Whole Christian denominations look at certain points of the clear Word of God and deem parts of it as unfair and unjust, doubting that God means what He says. I've heard many Christians say things along the lines of, "I know what the Bible says, but I think such and such," as if God is most certainly in error. And let's face it, in those times when life afflicts us with tragedy, sickness or some other serious trial, we can easily fall into the mistake of accusing God as if He has wronged us, demanding He come through with what we demand, as if a test of His love.

No. God's Word and will is right and good...always. As Christians we are to strive not to challenge or test Him, but to seek His will and endure in His ways, knowing that He is love, and is bringing us through all these trials and will indeed come through on His promise of salvation in Christ.

We can use all of these temptations of Jesus in His human flesh as inspiration and even example for how we should strive to be in our own temptations. We should constantly be working

to mature in faith and conform our mindset to the mind of Christ. But in the end, we will fail. With prayerful struggling against sin and intentionally putting into practice strategies to better fight those temptations which particularly vex us, we can get better at living a sanctified life. But we'll never get it perfect.

This is why ultimately this temptation of Christ gives us comfort not in the example of Christ for how we should be, but in the reality of what Christ has indeed done. This was Jesus doing human battle with Satan and evil temptation...and knocking it out of the park. This was the first battle of Christ's earthly ministry and it is complete and uncontested victory. This is Jesus standing in for us and being the human righteousness God requires of His created people.

So yes, strive to have a better mindset, behave, improve and mature in your walk as child of the Most High God. But do this in thankfulness to Christ, whose victory in living a perfect human life and then giving that life up to atone for all sin, has most certainly made you a holy child of God. The victory is Christ's for you. So have a mindset of victory because temptation and sin stand powerless before Him.

Fight temptation. In your wants and needs know that Christ is sufficient. Against the lures of the material world, know that only the gifts of the One True God endure into eternity. In your relationship with God, know that He is God and you are not. Know that His Word is true forever and do not doubt.

And when you fail to live up to this perfect standard, run to the Jesus who kept it in your place. Know that sin and Satan are indeed your enemy, but stand defeated under Christ's feet. Following Christ in faith, wherever you fail Jesus stands in for you, victorious.

Amen.