

February 26, 2012  
Sermon for 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent  
St. Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
Mark 1:9-15

Mark 1:9-15 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup>In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. <sup>11</sup>And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” <sup>12</sup>The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup>And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him. <sup>14</sup>Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version.* Wheaton : Standard Bible Society, 2001

Grace, mercy, and peace from the one who touches our lives, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

No sooner had the Jordan River water slowly trickled off our Lord's wet head, the hot wilderness sand glued itself to His damp walking feet as the Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness. Behind Him the famous river snaked along; before Him the ancient serpent lay in wait. Still drenched with baptismal water, Jesus marched into the desert of temptation. Heaven and hell were about to exchange blows. And in the celestial realm, you could have heard a pin drop.

You are tempted to view the fight as a spectator, to whoop and cheer for your Big Brother who is about to blacken the eye of the bully from hell. But you are not a fan in the stands. No, you are in Christ. In Jesus, humanity goes toe-to-toe with the heavyweight champion of hell. When this one Man enters the ring with the tempter, all men step in with Him. Just as in Adam all humanity fell through temptation into sin and death, so in Christ all humanity will rise through His obedience into righteousness and life. You are *not* in the audience; you are in the desert, for you are in Christ.

The devil had heard the Father's sermon at the baptism of His Son. He watched Him fast, he saw Him hunger, so he devised a plan of attack. The other Gospel writers record that "the tempter came to him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread'" (Mt 4:3). Do you hear what is suggested?

The devil is saying, "If it is true, what that voice from the clouds said, then why has he evidently abandoned you to die of starvation?"

Why is he depriving you of the basic necessities of life?" So, you see, Satan, hungry for victory, has swung his fist at the empty belly of our Lord.

But no more had the punch begun before it was blocked—not by human strength, not by willpower, not by argumentation, but by the Word of God. Jesus answered and said, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'" (Mt 4:4). And the Word that had proceeded from the mouth of God was, "*You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.*"

Bear this in mind. The temptation was not simply to turn rocks into food. Satan lured Jesus to turn from the trustworthy words of His Father to the feelings of the human heart. But instead of turning stones into bread, Christ stuffed the stone of His Father's Word into the devil's open, tempting mouth.

That same satanic mouth has dropped such doubting thoughts into your suffering heart, hasn't it? At your Baptism too the Father said, "You are my son, you are my daughter, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." But does it always seem so? When the bills pile up, have you wondered what use is the Father's rich grace if you haven't money to pay what you owe? If you are so loved by Him, why did He allow you to be injured, to become ill, to spend hour upon hour in pain and misery? If God is good, why is my life so bad? So goes the temptation to despair.

But as it was with Jesus, so it is with you. Satan is luring you to turn from the trustworthy words of your Father to the ever changing feelings of your human heart. Do not trust yourself; trust your Father.

If He sent His own beloved Son to the cross, do not pretend that He will spare you crosses, sufferings, and pains. But behind these masks of suffering is the smiling face of your beloved Father. The Lord disciplines those He loves (Heb 12:6). In love He is bringing you, cross by cross, suffering by suffering, to the glory of the resurrection.

But again, our Text, having failed in his initial assault, Satan planned his next attack. As Matthew records:

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. *“If you are the Son of God,”* he said, *“throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’ ”* (4:5–6)

Is the devil simply trying to break our Lord’s neck? No, he is far more sinister than that. He is saying, You claim, then, that You are the beloved Son of God, in whom God is well pleased. If that is so, if your Father loves You *so much* and You are so well pleasing to Him, then I suppose He will do anything to protect You. So, throw Yourself down from the temple. Why, He has even said He will protect you with His angels. You rely on His Word. Take Him at His Word and fly, O Son of God.

This second temptation is one of presumption. It is written, *“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see”* (Heb 11:1). And again, *“We live by faith, not by sight”* (2 Cor 5:7). This temptation of the devil is to abandon faith and live by sight.

It completely does away with the cross in the Christian life and substitutes for it a theology of glory, that is, an arrogant, faithless presumption that because we are saved God will always shower us with blessings and miracles.

Having been defeated in the first two rounds with our Lord, Satan stepped forward for one final and climactic effort. In the first temptation, the devil held adversity and pain in the face of Jesus; here, Satan holds prosperity and delight before Him. The devil knew that Jesus knew what sufferings awaited Him, so the devil said, in essence: "Because you are God's Son, you deserve better than this miserable life; you deserve riches, honor, glory. I can give all that to you, yes, all that and more if only you will get on your knees and worship me."

But the devil, who can't see past his own pride, didn't count on one thing. **Our Lord Came Not to Be Served, but to Serve** and to give His life as a ransom for many—as a ransom for you. And if he came not to be served, certainly he came not to pursue wealth, fame, and glory! He came to "*fear, love, and trust in God above all things,*" and in so doing, to fulfill the Law for you. So He said, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only'" (Mt 4:10).

Do you see what our Lord has done in His conquest of Satan with all His temptations? He has utterly reversed the fall of the first man and has brought forward a new humanity, with Himself being a new Adam, who bears in His own body the source of all true and lasting life. What you could not do, Christ has done for you.

The tempter whom you could never defeat on your own—Christ has defeated. The new beginning that you could never create—Jesus has created for you.

In the Garden of Eden, the first Adam was defeated by the ancient serpent. But in the wasteland of the Judean wilderness, Jesus fought off the temptations of the evil one. Every fiery arrow shot from Satan's bow was doused in the water of the Word. Heaven and hell stood toe-to-toe, and hell was left defeated in the dust.

The Lord Jesus fought this battle for you. His victory over the devil is your victory as well, for all that Christ accomplished has been reckoned to you as your very own. When you fall prey to the temptations of satan, flee to the One who defeated Satan. Those who are in Christ Jesus cannot be harmed by the enticements of evil. As in Adam you died in sin, so in the obedient Christ you live. Repent and return to Him. Leave the old Adam with his death, and come to the new Adam with all His life. Jesus will receive and embrace you as His own. He who was tempted for you is never tempted to turn you away. His baptism is your Baptism; His conquering of sin is your conquering of sin; His crucifixion, His resurrection, His ascension, are yours. What belongs to the head belongs to the body, and you are the body of Christ, living members of that Man who is also God—the One in whom you have the life of the Father.

*“Lead us not into temptation,”* our Father, but lead us into the One who conquered the tempter for us, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!

Amen.