

Satan Tempts Jesus

March 6, 2022

Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The world is a dangerous place. Death, war, destruction, and people fleeing for safety. But there's even more danger in this world than what most people see. Because there's spiritual danger as well. Spiritual forces in this world that stand opposed to us. St. Paul even wrote to the church at Ephesus, **"...we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."** (Eph. 6:12)

In our Gospel reading, just after our Lord's baptism in the River Jordan, Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the desert. At His baptism, God the Father said, **"This is my Son whom I love. With Him, I am well pleased. Listen to Him."** And it was the Spirit of God that descended on Him like a dove. And so, we heard, **"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for 40 days, being tempted by the devil."** (Luke 4:1-2a) Jesus was engaged in a spiritual battle against the evil one. And while we read about three temptations, we also know from Scripture that Jesus was tempted by Satan more times than that. Because Satan wants to distract Jesus from His mission of salvation.

Out in the wilderness, Jesus **"...ate nothing during those [40] days."** And at the end of those days, he was hungry. Thinking that Jesus might be hungry enough to forget His mission for a while, Satan decided to tempt Him. He said to Jesus, **"If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."** Jesus was

tempted to use His divine power to care for Himself first, but it didn't work because Jesus recognized Satan as the father of lies.

So, Satan decided to increase the difficulty of his temptation. He took Jesus up... ***“and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to 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.’”*** (Luke 4:5-6) Trying to see if Jesus might be tempted by glory and power, he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world. The people, their kings, all their powerful forces, as well as their splendor. He said to Jesus that he's the one if he wants, who can provide for Jesus all the life of luxury that He could ever want and all that Jesus needed to do was to bow down and worship him. But that didn't work either.

So then, Satan led Jesus ***“...to Jerusalem and puts Him on the pinnacle of the temple and says, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here...’”*** Again, trying to create doubt in Jesus, similar to the time he tricked Adam and Eve when he said, ***“Did God really say?”*** Satan said to Jesus, ***“If you are the Son of God...”*** and trying to tempt Him using Psalm 91, he said ***“For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.’”*** (Ps. 91:11) And ***“On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”***(Ps. 91:12) He encouraged Jesus to put God to the test by using angels for protection...but Jesus refused.

Deceitfulness, lies, temptation, and danger, those things seem to be in our world even today. Satan has been and continues to attack all that God creates and loves. Again and again, he disrupts peace among nations. He tempts individuals. And while we might wish for an end to it, there are also times when we can be enticed and deceived because of our own sinful natures. Make no mistake about it, Satan will use anything at his disposal to get us to sin. That we might watch out and care only for ourselves. To disregard God as well as our neighbors in need and take us away from God's mission.

Now, I'm sure that at one point out in the wilderness, Satan must've thought that He had Jesus right where he wanted Him. Jesus was hungry, but when He was tempted, He also recalled how the people of God out in the desert had once grumbled and complained. They wanted more than bread. And yet, God said to them, **"...man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."** (Dt. 8:3b) And when Satan tempted Him to bow down and worship him, Jesus again referred to scripture saying, **"It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.'"**(Luke 4:8)

Even when Satan tried to get Jesus to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, God's Word made flesh replied, **"You shall not put the Lord your God to the test..."**(Dt. 6:16) For while He knew that God would protect Him, Jesus also knew from Scripture not to test His heavenly Father. And so, when Satan **"...had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time."** (Luke 4:13) Because it wouldn't be Satan's last attempt to hinder God's plan of salvation.

And yet, Jesus couldn't be deterred from His mission, even when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Satan couldn't stop our Lord Jesus. Because Jesus would go on to take away the strength of sin by the shedding of His precious blood cross for all, that we might be forgiven for all the times we have given in to temptation and sinned. So that, through His death and resurrection, all those who believe in Him, might overcome sin, death, and the devil. And that His mission might continue to be accomplished – in and through all believers.

You know, the other day, I came across a story about some Lutherans who lived during the time of Martin Luther. They admired and looked up to Luther. He boldly proclaimed the faith. But they also noticed that while Luther was rather busy and engaged in matters of the faith, he didn't seem to be troubled by temptation like they were. So they decided to write

Luther, saying, *“We’re harassed by many temptations, which appeal to us so often and so strongly, that they give us no rest. But you don’t seem to be troubled in this way. What is your secret? We’d like to know. Don’t temptations bother you? How are you immune to this?”* And much to their surprise, Luther took the time to reply to them. He wrote, *“I, too, know something of temptation. But the difference is that when temptation comes knocking at the door of my heart, I answer by saying, ‘Go away! This place is occupied by Christ.’”*

The Lord knows the world is a dangerous place. Death, war, destruction, and people fleeing to safety. There’s a very real spiritual and physical threat to many right now. But thanks be to God that it doesn’t have to be that way, Eternal! Because our great God prepares us and equips us, with His very Word that overcame Satan. That we might put on the full armor of God, take up the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and boldly go out into the world to proclaim His Good News with all its power. That those who live in darkness might one day come to live in the light of God’s peace and rejoice with us in His presence, now and always.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.