

Invocavit
St. Matthew 4:1-11
February 18th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

It Is Written

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

God Almighty would have us put our trust in His Word. This is why many of the hymns talk about the importance of trusting in God and His Word. His Word is our trust. His Word is a mighty fortress that does not allow our enemies to break in and defeat us. His Word preserves us in the one, true faith until we are called to our eternal home. God's Word helps us to defeat our spiritual enemies in this life: the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh.

We see the Lord battle the first enemy, the devil, in the Gospel reading. And we see how the devil uses our flesh and the world to tempt us, through the temptation of our Lord + Jesus. We also see the devil's temptation of us in the Old Testament reading from Genesis 3. In that text we see our first parents fall into sin. Adam and Eve's first temptation was done with food. Our Lord's first temptation was done with food. Our Lord's second temptation was to put Himself in harm's way and see if God would rescue Him. And His third temptation was to forsake the worship of God and choose another god.

Even though Adam and Eve's temptation centered on the fruit that the Lord God said not to eat, the other two temptations of our Lord are inherent in our first parents first temptation. Especially our Lord's last temptation: to worship another god. Adam and Eve are deceived by the devil, because He tempts them with the knowledge of good and evil, that is, the knowledge that will make them like God. In other words, if they were to eat of the fruit they would cast aside the Lord God as the One, True God of theirs and they would be their own god. They would worship themselves. They would be the ones most important in their lives. And is that not the way it is even today. Mankind worships himself. What I want is most important for me. What other people want is secondary.

The same goes double for the what God wants. There are even Christians who do not have a working knowledge of the Ten Commandments; they do not know what the Commandments require and forbid. During this Lenten season, we are to focus upon our sin—our breaking of the Ten Commandments. How are we to do that if we do not even know what God would have us do and not do? At the beginning of every service we confess our sins. Sure, it is a "general" confession, but we should at least be thinking about some sin that we have done, that we wish the Lord God would forgive. But, how are we to do that if we do not know what it is God would have us do and not do?

This is why we spend extra time in the Small Catechism of Martin Luther during the penitential seasons, so that we have a refresher course at least twice a year. Although we should daily and weekly be in the Small Catechism learning about our Triune God, and about what He does and has done for us. For, the Small Catechism is a brief exhibition of the Word of God. It teaches us everything we need to know about God's Word in a simple manner. And in knowing the Small Catechism well, we have a ready defense against the temptations of our enemies: the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh.

We see what happens when man and woman do not have a solid working knowledge of the Word of God in the Old Testament lesson. For, what does Eve say? She is clearly not catechized well by her husband, Adam. And this is the responsibility of every head of household—every husband and father—to teach His family the Word of God. This is why every part of the Small Catechism begins with the words, "As the head of the family should teach it to his family in a simple way." Adam did not catechize his wife well, because when the devil asks her about God's command, she gets it wrong. She adds something that God did not say.

We cannot fend off our enemies' temptations if we cannot get the Word of God correct. Even before their fall into sin, we can already see a chink in the armor of our first parents, for they did not learn God's commandment correctly. They added to it. Unfortunately, this is the case with all of Adam and Eve's children—with all of us. We forget God's Word during temptation. We make up excuses to disregard God's Word during temptation. We, like our first parents, take what we desire because we are our own gods and lords. We do whatever we want.

This can be readily seen in the so-called "small" sins which we commit daily not even thinking about them. When somebody on the road does something that you do not like, do you let it go, or do you yell at that person (even though they cannot hear you) and curse them out? Most times I would venture it is the latter. We do this so often we sometimes even forget that this is a sin. It is such a small thing, but even this "small" sin is deserving of God's eternal wrath and displeasure. That is how strict our Lord God would have the Ten Commandments kept, so that if we break it in even something as simple as cursing, or swearing, or lying, we deserve God's eternal wrath in Hell. Look at our first parents. What was their sin? They ate fruit. God said not to eat fruit from a certain tree. On the surface it doesn't even seem that hard of a temptation to resist. There were other fruit trees and other food in abundance. There was no need to eat the fruit from this tree.

But tell somebody they cannot do something, and inevitably they will desire to do it. The same is true of us. When somebody says, "Do not look down." We look down. When somebody says, "Heads up!" We duck and cover our heads. It is who we are as humans. We cannot obey what God would have us obey.

We've seen how Adam and Eve's temptation mirrors our Lord Jesus' temptation in that He was tempted with food, and with forsaking the worship of God, but what about the second temptation? Adam and Eve put themselves in harm's way by even being near the tree that is forbidden to eat its fruit. We do the same thing when we do things, or go to places, where we know it will be hard to not fall into sin. We place ourselves into situations where we have a greater danger of falling into temptation to sin, and then we expect our Lord God to rescue us. If you love getting drunk, don't go to a bar. If you love to gamble, don't go to a casino. If you have trouble being faithful to your spouse, don't look at the opposite sex, or go to places where you will be tempted to be unfaithful to your spouse. Do not put yourself in a place where you will be easily tempted and then expect God to rescue you.

Our defense against the devil's, the world's and our own sinful desires' temptations is the Word of God. We should daily read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Word of God, so that we have a

sure defense against the tempter's temptations. However, no matter how prepared we are, on account of our first parents sin, we are born and bred in sin. Sin corrupts our very nature. This is what we call original sin, the sin that effects our very core. The sin we cannot escape. It is why no matter how hard we try, we will never get rid of sin; we will never stop sinning; we will never stop failing to resist temptation.

This is why the Lord + Jesus Christ came into the world. This is why He bears our flesh. For He can resist the temptations of the devil, the world, and the flesh. And we are shown exactly how He defeats the devil in today's Gospel. He is tempted with food, just like our first parents. But unlike them who have an abundance of food around them, since He has been fasting for forty days, He is hungry. The answer to the temptation is simple: trust in God and His Word. Look to God for all your needs of body and soul, and He will provide. For, He loves you and cares for you. Trust in this promise of His, that He will always take care of you and your needs.

The Word of God is the answer to the second temptation as well. Even when Satan, like Eve, distorts the Word of God, our Lord's perfect knowledge of the Word of God, rescues Him from this temptation. Do not put yourself in harm's way and expect God to rescue you. This is tempting God, and we do not tempt God, for this is asking God to act contrary to His nature. God does not fall victim to temptation. But, this is for our benefit. For, even though this is the first temptation of our Lord + Jesus, it is not the last, as the devil comes to our Lord throughout His earthly ministry in the form of the Pharisees and Sadducees, to discredit Him and turn men's hearts away from their one, true Redeemer and Messiah.

Finally, worship only the Triune God. But, because we seek only our own desires often, the Lord + Jesus bears our flesh and fulfills the Law of the One, True Triune God. He fulfills what we are unable to do. He keeps the Law which we are unable to keep. He rescues us just as the Lord God promised in the Garden of Eden. Our Lord + Jesus came and crushed the head of the serpent, by being bruised on the tree of the holy cross for all mankind, and especially for those who believe on His Name.

Therefore, let us cling in faith to our Savior + Jesus Christ. For His Word brings the promise of forgiveness from our sins which we commit daily. His Blood was shed, so that we might have forgiveness from all the times we fell prey to temptation. So then, let us pray that our Lord God would rescue us and defend us from all temptations, and that He would be a strong abode and a mighty fortress, and preserve us in His holy Word, for by Adam's sin all mankind as fallen into sin, and are in desperate need of a Savior. Today, our Lord + Jesus Christ comes to defeat the devil and His temptations for you. He does what we are unable to do. And He does it so that we might remain His and join Him and all the saints in Heaven for all eternity. May the Lord God Almighty grant this unto us all. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.