

Invocavit
St. Matthew 4:1-11
March 10th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

The Tempter Came to Him

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.

In the beginning of mankind our Lord God, our Creator, placed man and woman into a garden of paradise. The devil, the tempter came to them. And through his lies and deception they were led into sin by him. Therefore, they were cast out of paradise; out of the lush garden with ample food and water, into the wilderness of the world. Our Lord + Jesus Christ, after His baptism is led by the Holy Ghost into this same wilderness into which we have been cast. Our first parents faced the devil in a garden of paradise, and failed. Leaving us to hunger and thirst for the righteousness and favor of the Lord God. Our Lord + Jesus Christ faces the devil in the wilderness that our first parents created by their sin. And in the state of hunger that we all face on account of our sinfulness, he faces the devil and his temptations.

Adam and Eve, our first parents, met the temptations of the devil on their own terms and by their own will. We are told by the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew that our Lord + Jesus is led into the wilderness to face the devil by the Holy Ghost. Now, this is not to be understood that the Lord + Jesus went against His will; that He was forced into the wilderness by the Holy Ghost. But rather, that He conformed His will to the will of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost desired that He be tempted by the devil in the wilderness, and our Lord + Jesus also desired to go into the wilderness and be tempted by the devil; to undergo the same temptations that our first parents endured, so that at the beginning of His ministry He might show us that what we are unable to do, He is willing and able to defeat the devil and his temptations which we are unable to resist.

We daily sin much. This much we know from our daily lives. We have to constantly be in repentance; constantly live in our Holy Baptism drowning the Old Adam within us by admitting daily our sins to God the Father. We need to come often to this sanctuary and hear the words of absolution spoken to us by the pastor—the very words given to him by God the Father for him to speak into our ears and comfort us as we endure the trials and temptations from this life and world.

All of this contrition over our sins should lead us to cling to our Lord + Jesus Christ in faith. For He has defeated the devil, the world and sinful flesh for us. And that is the point of today's Gospel reading. Today's theme is not about how we can avoid temptation by doing the things that our Lord + Jesus does in this Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew. That would be a very poor theme for us to follow, for we when we try to resist temptation—when we try to stop doing all the

little sins that plague us in our daily lives—we only find that we fail miserably. We curse, we neglect things, we are unloving toward our fellow man, and we keep on doing it no matter how hard we try. All of our attempts to “be a better person” are met with failure. We remain in our sins.

And if by chance we happen to improve ourselves; if we stop committing some sin that has plagued us, well even then we cannot brag about how holy we are, for there is still this nagging thing called original sin—the sin we inherited from our first parents. The saying goes, “that the apple does not fall far from the tree.” In the same way that our first parents succumbed to the devil’s temptations, we, their children, also daily succumb to the devil’s temptations to gratify ourselves and our desires.

This is why in our contrition over our sins we should be looking at how to improve ourselves through our obedience to the Law. Instead we should cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus and His works and merits for us. He obeys the Law perfectly. He resists the temptations of the devil. He suffers and dies for us on the tree of the holy cross; bearing our punishment. In our sorrow over our sins, let us cling to our Lord + Jesus. Let us cling to Him and His perfect obedience on our behalf. Let us not cling to our good works or our imperfect keeping of the Law, but rather, let us cling to the works and merits of our Lord + Jesus Christ Who boldly and willingly enters into the wilderness of this world to face off against the devil, and defeat him.

Our Lord + Jesus battles the devil in the devil’s kingdom and according to the devil’s design, and defeats him soundly. Our Lord + Jesus defeats the devil using the tool that our first parents failed to use properly—the Word of God.

The Word of God taught and preached in its truth and purity and the Blessed Sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution can defeat the devil and all his lies. This why we should come to this holy place often, so that we might be strengthened and renewed by the holy Word of God. For, the Word of God will continuously tell us that our sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake. The Word of God removes from our ears and tongues the lies of the devil. The Word of God places into our ears and upon our tongues the truth of God’s plan of salvation for us.

Our Lord God does not leave us alone to fend off the trials and temptations of the devil. He sends His Son, our Lord + Jesus into our flesh, to bear our sin and be our redeemer. Our Lord + Jesus follows the Holy Ghost into the wilderness to defeat the devil and his lies. The tempter came to Him and tried to deceive Him by tempting Him in the same way that he does us with the desires to give in to the desires of our own flesh when he tempts our Lord + Jesus to turn stones to bread. He tried to deceive Him to give into the same desires that our flesh has when we listen to the pull of the world to think that we are invincible and that we will go on living in this world free from harm, when the devil tempted Him by trying to convince Him to jump off the pinnacle of the temple. The devil even tried to lure Him as he does us with being loved by the world. When we desire to be loved by the world instead of God, we are bowing down and worshiping the devil.

The devil tempts our Lord + Jesus the same way that we are tempted every day with the desires of our flesh, the desires of the world, and the deceptions and lies of the devil with lead us away from the One, True Triune God into the worship of ourselves and our idols. The tempter came to our Lord + Jesus to defeat Him just as He did our first parents, but our Lord + Jesus, even when He was hungry and weak, still resists the temptations of the devil. Our Lord is victorious where we and our first parents failed miserably.

Adam and Eve were given a garden of paradise in which to live and dwell. They were kicked out of the garden to toil and sweat in labor in the wilderness of the world. We still toil and sweat from labor in this wilderness; we still live with the consequences of our first parents’ sin and our daily sinning.

But, our Lord + Jesus entered into the wilderness of this world, and He defeated the devil, and not just in the wilderness after forty days and nights of fasting after His baptism, but He defeated the devil, and sin and death once and for all on the tree of the holy cross. Our first parents were defeated by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but our Brother—our Lord + Jesus Christ—defeated the devil, the world and our sinful flesh by the tree of the cross.

And now through this once and for all time sacrifice of our Lord for us and for all mankind, we have the promise of a return to paradise. Our Lord + Jesus secured for us the promise of an eternal paradise in Heaven. There we will be free from the daily weight of sin. There we will be free from the temptations of the evil foe, the devil. There the angels of Heaven will care for us, even as they did for our Lord + Jesus after He was tempted by the devil. When we pass from this life into Heaven we will be carried to the waiting arms of our heavenly Father to live with Him for all eternity, and sing and pray the eternal liturgy of the wedding feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom to His Bride, the Church.

Therefore, my dear beloved, when you are hounded by the temptations of sin, and when you succumb to those temptations, do not despair, but rather cling in faith to the promises that our Lord + Jesus has won for you on the tree of the holy cross. He won for you forgiveness from your sins, and promises an eternal life with Him and all the saints. For, He has redeemed and saved you with His innocent suffering and death, and His precious Blood poured out for you.

So then, let us come to this holy altar and receive the gifts that our Lord + Jesus won for, and which He gives to us in bread and wine. Receive His Body and Blood given for you for the remission of all your sins. 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.

Soli Deo Gloria!