

Invocavit

St. Matthew 4:1-11

March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020

Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC

Simpsonville, SC

St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC

Augusta, GA

Pastor Jerald Dulas

## If You Are the Son of God

*In Nomine Iesu!*

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

### **Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

Lord God, heavenly Father, inasmuch as the Adversary doth continually afflict us, and as a roaring lion doth walk about, seeking to devour us: We beseech Thee for the sake of the suffering and death of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, to help us by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and to strengthen our hearts by Thy Word, that our Enemy may not prevail over us, but that we may evermore abide in Thy grace, and be preserved unto everlasting life; through the same, Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

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

In the sermon on Wednesday you may have wondered why I was preaching about Adam and Eve when there was no other mention of them in the Propers. The intent was to point you forward to today's Propers. In the Old Testament lesson, we hear the history of the fall into sin of our first parents. The Old Testament lesson, in which we see our first parent's failure to resist the deceptions and temptations of the devil, contrasts with the Gospel reading from the Evangelist and Apostle St. Matthew, where we see our Lord + Jesus being tempted by the devil, and thoroughly defeating him.

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, have a free will. They could have easily chosen to resist the temptations of that serpent of old, the devil. In their free will, they chose to sin. We have inherited our will from our first parents. Like them, after the fall, in spiritual matters we are unable to choose to obey God's Law, except through the working of the Holy Ghost in us. Because of the fall of our first parents, our will has been corrupted, so that we always choose to sin. The only free will we have left is the free will to choose to do matters pertaining to civil righteousness, and to do things subject to reason. We can choose what we put on, and whether we go to work or not; whether to eat or drink, and the like.

When the tempter comes to tempt us, left to our own devices, apart from the help and assistance of the Holy Ghost through the Word of God, we fail to resist the temptation, and fall into sin. The Word of God is our help. It is the means which points us to our Mighty Fortress; to our Lord God. In Him we find our ability to do His will. This is why the Word of God must always be on our lips and in our thoughts. The Word of God is the means by which we can resist the devil and his slings and arrows aimed at us to destroy us and lead us into great sin and shame. Though all the world be filled with devils eager to devour us—for we are a tasty treat to them—we need have no fear of them when we have the Word of God.

Our Lord + Jesus gives us a perfect example of this in the Gospel reading from the Evangelist

and Apostle St. Matthew. In all of the temptations aimed at Him by Satan, our Lord rebukes Him with the Word of God. This is also what separates our Lord + Jesus from our first parents. They ignored the Word of God; His Law forbidding them to eat of the tree in the middle of the Garden. They chose to disobey God, and we have inherited their sin to this day. Because of this we are constantly filled with an inner turmoil to either obey God's Law, or follow the desires of our own heart. We struggle with sin because of our conscience is corrupted.

Not so with our Lord + Jesus. He is without sin. This is why we teach that our Lord + Jesus was tempted in all points, but without sin. He did not have this inner struggle that we have. His conscience was perfect. It never once thought about doing the wrong thing. It never once thought about not doing the will of His heavenly Father. His will was perfect. He took on our flesh, but He did not take on our sin. This is why when confronted with the temptations of the devil, He so easily defeats him, because His will is perfect. He sees the way out given by the Lord God—through His holy Word. This is why there was no last temptation of Christ, because He did not have the inner turmoil that we have. His will was always set toward doing what His heavenly Father sent Him to do.

Even in the Garden of Gethsemane. His will was set to do what the heavenly Father desired Him to do; to go to the cross and suffer and die for the atonement of the whole world, so that us poor, miserable sinners, who daily fail to resist temptation, might have a means by which our sins can be forgiven, and a means by which His righteous obeying of the Law and will of the Lord God, might be credited to us. In His death on the tree of the holy cross He pays the penalty that we, and our first parents, deserve. We go free, and He suffers death and shame. This is all because His will is perfect. If His will is not perfect—if our Lord + Jesus had an inner struggle with sin, like we do on a daily basis—His sacrifice would not help us any, because He would be just as full of sin as we are.

He was tempted in all points, just as we are, but without sin. When He took upon Himself our flesh, He did not take upon Himself our sin. He was conceived of the Holy Ghost, not through the actions of man or the will of man, just as St. John the Evangelist and Apostle declares in the opening chapter of His Gospel.

This is why our Lord's encounter with the devil is different than our first parents encounter with the devil. Our first parents chose to ignore God's Word, and chose to do their tenets of their own will. Our Lord + Jesus refutes the devil with the Word of God, and chooses to continue to do the will of His heavenly Father. Our first parents lived in a Garden full of all the fruits and herbs of the earth. They could have eaten from any tree, and had their fill. But they chose to eat from the one tree of which they were forbidden to eat. They could have satisfied their hunger from any other tree, but they did not, and we bear the consequences of their sin to this day. Our Lord + Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights when the devil came to tempt Him. He was in the wilderness. The very opposite of a garden. There was no food for Him there.

In both cases the devil comes to both our first parents and our Lord + Jesus and tempts them with food. Adam and Eve were tempted with a tree from which they were not supposed to eat. Our Lord + Jesus was tempted with stones to make into bread. Our first parents were overcome by that tree, just as we hear chanted in the Proper Preface for this season. But our Lord + Jesus overcame the devil and all His temptations through the Word of God—through His perfect keeping of the will and Law of God—and then He thoroughly defeated Satan and his horde on the tree of the holy cross.

This is why the devil cannot harm us anymore. He is judged. The deed is done. One little word from the Word of God can fell him. The Name of our Lord + Jesus defeats the devil and all his demons, because it is He that has conquered sin, death and the devil on the tree of the holy cross.

Our Lord + Jesus defeats the temptations of the devil through the Word of God. Man does not

live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God. We too have our life and salvation bound up in the Word of God. We have been promised that our Lord God would always provide for us a way out of temptation. For some people they think that this means that they are going to receive some great sign or warning; our Lord + Jesus holding up a big sign saying, "Don't go in there." But this is not the case. The means by which we resist the devil's temptations is through the Word of God. All the means to refute the devil are found in the Word of God.

Our Lord + Jesus shows us this today in the Gospel reading. In every temptation He drives back the devil with the Word of God. We also have this weapon; a trusty shield and weapon against the slings and arrows of the devil, the world and our very own sinful flesh. We drive back our enemies with the Word of God. The problem is that when the tempter comes, like our first parents, we choose to either forget about the Word of God, change the Word of God to fit our own will, like Eve did, or make excuses why we are going to continue to do this sin, regardless of what God's Word says. In essence, we plain ignore our weapon and shield; we neglect its use, all to satisfy the desires of our sinful hearts and will. Just like Adam and Eve did.

Our sin exposes our nakedness. Our sinfulness uncovers us and reveals the corruption within us. It reveals that we are unable to save ourselves from our own corrupt will and desire. We struggle with sin in our conscience daily; it gnaws at us. We struggle with the internal turmoil of our sinful conscience daily. But this is why we need to look outside of ourselves for our salvation. We need to look to the One Who bears our human flesh, but does not carry our sinfulness with Him. We need to cling in faith to our Lord + Jesus; to His works and merits on our behalf. We need to cling in faith to His perfect keeping of the Law and will of God. For we daily sin much. We daily struggle with sin. Our Lord + Jesus does not struggle with sin, for His will is perfectly aligned to the will of the heavenly Father, and so He easily defeats the devil in his own territory, and gives that victory to us.

Our Lord + Jesus came down from Heaven, because His creation—us humans—fell into sin through the transgression of our first parents. We were unable to resist the temptations of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. But He is without sin, and He easily defeats our enemies. Then He even pays for our punishment with His very own life on the tree of the holy cross.

When we are faced with temptation, we have the Word of God has a sword and shield against the devil and his horde. But when we fail, because that is what we do, we have a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord. He was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and bears our flesh, but He is without sin, so that His perfect sacrifice on our behalf is accepted by the heavenly Father as a payment for the sins of the whole world, and especially those of us who believe. The rewards that He won by this sacrifice He freely gives to us. We have our life and salvation in Him and in Him alone. Let us give Him thanks and praise forever and ever. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### **Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who didst fast forty days and forty nights in the wilderness, and didst overcome all the temptations of the devil, we thank Thee that for our salvation Thou wast in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, and as our merciful High Priest canst be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and we pray Thee, give us grace steadfastly to resist the allurements of sin, that, the lusts of our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey Thy godly leadings in righteousness and true holiness, to Thy honor and glory, Who livest and reignest, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

#### **The Votum:**

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

*Soli Deo Gloria!*