

Invocavit
St. Matthew 4:1-11
February 21st, 2021
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
All Saints Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Myrtle Beach, 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:

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.

The devil always lies. He is the father of lies and so when he speaks, he can speak no other thing than a lie. Observe how he lied to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He twists the Word of the Lord God to make it seem as if the Lord God had said something that He did not. The serpent says, "Did not God say you could eat of every tree in the Garden?" The question is designed to make it seem like the Lord God is promising something with the one hand, and taking it away with the other. Every tree is supposed to be for food. Why is this tree different? What is the Lord God keeping from you? We see the affect this question has on Eve, for in her response she has distorted and added to what the Lord God had commanded. The Lord God said one should not eat from the tree in the midst of the Garden, but Eve adds that one could not touch it, either.

Seeing that his deception is working, the devil then proceeds to bring into question the motives of the Lord God. The serpent says that, "The Lord God is keeping something from you, in this case, the knowledge of good and evil." He also says, "You will not surely die." This was a half-truth. So-called half-truths are still lies, though. Yes, they would not die right away. The fruit of the tree was not a poison that kills instantly. Rather, it contained a poison from which Adam and Eve, and all their children, would eventually die.

Sadly, we know the rest of the story. Eve believed the lies and deception of the devil, took of the fruit of the tree, and gave some to her husband, Adam, who was with her. That is what is most telling in this exchange between Eve and the serpent: Adam is there, with her, listening to this conversation with the serpent. Nowhere in the Scriptures is there any objection raised by Adam. He is and remains silent. This is why this sin is attributed to Adam. We do not say the sin of Eve, but we call it the sin of Adam, because Adam should have spoken up, refuted the devil, spoken the truth of what the Lord God had commanded, but he did not. So, they both ate and they got exactly what the serpent said they would, the knowledge of good and evil. They both realized in that moment that they were the evil. They

had disobeyed the Lord God. They were naked. Their sin was exposed. Their guilt was uncovered. And they, and their children, now bore the stain of sin in their flesh. On account of their sin, they were cast out of the Garden of Eden into the world of toil and hard labor.

The devil in the wilderness when he came to tempt our Lord + Jesus after He had fasted for forty days and forty nights, tried to use the same ploy on the second Adam. The first temptation of our Lord is with food, just as it was for Adam and Eve. "Command these stones to become bread." Again, the lie is put forth that the Lord God is withholding something good from you, in this case food. How can the Lord God be so cruel as to withhold that which would make for your happiness? The lie is that the fault is with the Lord God, and all one needs to do to remedy that is take the thing that makes for one's happiness; or do the thing that would make one happy. "Make bread, you will no longer be hungry. You deserve it after forty days and nights of fasting."

Unlike Adam and Eve, our Lord + Jesus combats the temptation of the devil with the one tool that we should all keep sharp in our arsenal: The Word of God. Our Lord's response is a simple one: It is written. Man lives by the Word of God and not by bread alone. True life comes through the Word of God; our knowledge of it; our understanding of it; our faith and trust in what the Word of God promises us. What our Lord + Jesus is saying to the devil is that his lies will not be tolerated by Him. Yes, the Son of God can make bread. He does not need to prove that He is the Son of God by curing His hunger. He proves that He is the Son of God by His preaching with the authority of the Lord God. As we heard last week, our Lord's preaching to His Apostles was that He was going up to Jerusalem to suffer and die for the sins of the whole world. This is how our Lord proves that He is the Son of God, by innocently suffering and dying on our behalf on the tree of the holy cross.

So, the first way that we combat the devil's lies is with the Word of God. This is why it is so important for us to continually be in the Word, to expand our knowledge of it, to learn and know the Ten Commandments and how we break them. This is why the Church spends the first part of Lent focusing on the Ten Commandments, and how we both break them daily with our sins of commission (the things we commit against the Law) and how we fail to fulfill the requirements of the Law with our sins of omission (the things which we do not do that the Law requires us to do), because in order for us to learn of what sins we need to repent, we need to learn about our sinfulness. It is especially important for the devil continues to speak his lies and deceptions into our ears, and if we do not know the Scriptures well, we will fall every time to temptation just like Adam and Eve, because we will believe the lies and distort the Word of God to fit the desires of our heart.

Adam and Eve when they were cast of the Garden discovered that the world also always lies. For as we well know, the devil's lies have spread into the rest of the world. The world promises glory and honor if one lives a certain way. Of course, this way is the way of the world. If one speaks out against the world, or refutes the lies of the world, that person is ostracized and made the fool by the world. You will be praised by the world if you tow the line of the world, but speak contrary to the world and you will face its wrath. As the Last Day approaches the world grows ever more outspoken against the Church and those who cling in faith to the Lord of the Church. This is because they know that their time is short; the time of their eternal destruction.

The world has certainly deceived many people outside of the Church with her allurements and pleasures. Most of these are easy for the Christian to resist, for it is easy for those who cling to the Word of God to see the inherent evil in these things. The world tempts the Christian, however, in a different way. Our temptation by the world comes in the form of neglecting worship, prayer and study of the Lord God's Word. How often do we catch ourselves wasting time on some social media platform complaining about the ways of the world, when we should rather be in the Word of God, reading it, meditating upon it, praying about it. Our Lord God has given us a wonderful gift in the Word of God that we neglect too often. We are indolent in our prayers, and daily neglect our greatest weapon against our

enemies of the devil and the world. As often as we fail in this on a daily basis, our Lord + Jesus does not fail on our behalf. He fulfills the Law of God perfectly for us.

He is tempted by the devil to bow down and worship him. The prize? All the kingdoms of the world. The Lord + Jesus could have the world; He would not need to suffer and die on the cross; He would not need to endure death and the grave. The whole world, and all those who live in it would be His all He needs to do is place Himself under the devil by bowing down and worshiping him. We have certainly taken the easy way out many times in our life. This of course has led to even greater trouble in our lives. This is why the Lord + Jesus presents to the second tool we can use to combat temptation, especially the temptation from the world, is the Word of God.

For what is our Lord's response to the devil? "It is written." The only One worthy of worship and praise is the Lord God. He is the only One Who does not place Himself below anyone. He is the only One Who is to be served. He is worthy of this honor, because He is the One Who did not take the easy way out of our salvation, but endured the mocking, spitting, beating, whipping, scourging and death cast upon Him by the evil men of this world. He paid the penalty of our transgressions—of our thirsting after glory; of our neglect of the Word of God through the allurements of the world. He served mankind—us—by sacrificing Himself for us on the tree of the holy cross. He offered up His sinless flesh for us who are filled with sin in our flesh.

Adam and Eve when they were cast out of the Garden after allowing themselves to believe the lies of the devil, and after discovering that the world also lies, realized that their simple act of disobedience to the Lord God also wrought sin in them. They, as well as all their children, are unable to obey the Law of God. Even if we are able to obey some outward tenets of the Law, the original sin, inheres in our flesh. We cannot shake it. It plagues us daily and often. Our sinful flesh also always lies to us. One of the lies that our flesh tells us is that because we live in a world of toil and hard labor, that our Lord God does not really care about us. Our flesh lies and says that we have to protector; no guardian against the evils of the devil and the world.

Our Lord + Jesus is tempted with this as well. Test the Lord God's grace and mercy; His protection and guarding by throwing Yourself off the pinnacle of the temple. Did not the Lord God promise that He would send His angels to protect You? He will give His angels charge over You, and bear you up. Besides the obvious distortion of holy Scripture—leaving out words to make it say what you want it to say contrary to the actual intent of the Scriptures—there is a temptation to test the limits of the Lord God's grace and mercy; His protection over us. How often do we test the limits our Lord's grace and mercy by living dangerous lives, doing dangerous things, and placing ourselves in dangerous situations? Certainly, it is dangerous to drive way over the speed limit, but this is not the only way that we place ourselves into danger. We place ourselves constantly into spiritual danger. Whenever we neglect the study of God's Word and our prayer to Him, we are placing ourselves in danger of destruction of our soul—we place our faith in danger.

Our Lord + Jesus in this temptation gives us one final weapon to use against the temptations of the devil, the world, and our own flesh. That third tool and weapon is the Word of God. For our Lord + Jesus says once again, "It is written." Our Lord does not save us in a miraculous way. He saves us simply by confronting the devil, in the devil's realm of the world, surrounded by men full of sin, and living a life perfectly obedient to the Law of God. He then offers up that perfect obedience as a sacrifice for us by suffering and dying for us on the tree of the holy cross. He does not need to perform great miracles for our salvation, even though He healed many sick, gave sight to many blind, and unstopped the ears of the deaf. He needed only to obey the Law of God and suffer on our behalf to win for us atonement for all our sins.

Our Lord + Jesus succeeded in resisting temptation where Adam and Eve, and all their children,

failed. We listen to and believe the lies of the devil the world and our own sinful flesh. The Lord + Jesus listened to and believed the Word of God. He did not doubt our Lord's Word or His grace and mercy or that He is the only One worthy of worship. He did all this on our behalf and for our salvation. In doing so He showed us our three great weapons against all temptations in this life and world: The Word of God, the Word of God, and the Word of God. Let us take up with fervent zeal our weapons against the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, and learn to look to our Lord + Jesus and His cross in all trial and temptation. 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!