

Invocavit

St. Matthew 4:1-11

February 26th, 2023

Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC

Simpsonville, SC

St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC

Augusta, GA

Pastor Jerald Dulas

The Tempter Came

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

And the tempter came and said unto Him, "If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'"

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

We beseech Thee, O Lord, by the mystery of our Savior's fasting and temptation, to arm us with the same mind that was in Him toward all evil and sin; and give us grace to keep our bodies in such holy discipline that our minds may be always ready to resist Satan and obey the motions of Thy Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One 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 Gospel from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew for today begins with the word "Then." When "then?" The word is pointing to the events that came before the events in today's Gospel pericope. So, what took place prior to our Lord's fasting and temptation? What took place before our Lord faced the devil? It was our Lord's baptism in the Jordan River by St. John the Baptist. When the Lord + Jesus had come up out of the waters, a Voice from Heaven declared Him to be His Only-Begotten Son—His Beloved Son—and the Holy Ghost descended from Heaven and alighted upon Him like a dove. In the Lord's baptism, He was declared to be the Son of God; He was declared to belong to the heavenly Father. Then our Lord + Jesus was led up of the Holy Ghost into the wilderness.

There He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and then when He hungered, the tempter came. What St. Matthew, the Apostle and Evangelist, whose Gospel is the instructing and teaching Gospel, is teaching us is that pattern of all those who are baptized into the Triune Name; all those who are baptized into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. When we were baptized, we were declared to be children of the heavenly Father. He claimed us as His own. He placed His Name upon us. This Name we recall whenever we make the sign of the holy cross. Indeed, we begin each of our Divine Services by reminding ourselves that we are the Lord's children. This is why the minister turns to us at the beginning of the Service and blesses us once again with that Name by which we are known in this world. We are Christians. We are the Lord's people. We are children of the heavenly Father. We bear His Name.

This is what we possess on account of our Holy Baptism. We are the Lord's, and through the faith created by the Holy Ghost through this means of grace, the Lord's is also ours. We cling in faith

to Him. We rely on Him. Our heart's place our hope and trust in Him. He is our treasure, as we learned this past Wednesday evening. When we are baptized, *then*, like our Lord + Jesus, we are led up of the Holy Ghost into this wilderness world. Our lives are not exempt from the slings and arrows of the enemies of the Lord God in this world. The tempter comes to us. We are left hungry by this world, for through our Holy Baptism, we have been made the enemy of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. Because we live in the world of our enemies, they seek our destruction at every turn. They work tirelessly to destroy our faith. They seek to lead us into despair by weighing us down with the severity of our guilt over our sins; the sins we cannot seem to shake away from us. And when that fails the enemies of the Lord God seek to destroy us by leading us into pride. Self-righteousness is an easy tool of the devil and his minions, for it causes us to think that our sins are not that bad; we are not as bad as other people. It is easy for us to dismiss our sins as nothing when we compare them to the sins of other people. There will always be someone who is a worse sinner than we are.

But we are not to judge our sins according to the sins of our neighbor, but we are to judge them according to the Ten Commandments. We are to judge our actions by the Law that demands perfection. This is what the first part of Lent is about; focusing our attention upon our breaking of the Law of God. We are to examine ourselves according to the Ten Commandments as St. Paul exhorts us to do. And when we do, we should find only sin and death from which we can in no wise set ourselves free. In the next few weeks when we examine ourselves according to the Ten Commandments, we are preparing ourselves for Passiontide, when we will turn our focus to the cross of our Lord's sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. We see that it is our sins that are being paid for on the cross. It is our breaking of the Ten Commandments for which our Lord + Jesus suffers. He suffers because when the tempter came, we failed that temptation.

St. Matthew in His Gospel teaches us that when we were baptized we were declared to be the Lord's people, even as our Lord + Jesus was declared to be His Beloved Son. We are the Lord's beloved children. And we are also like the Lord + Jesus in that as soon as we are baptized our enemies come to us to tempt us away from faith in the One, True Lord and God. *Unlike* the Lord + Jesus, however, we fail miserably when we are tempted. For we are but poor, miserable sinners, as we confessed moments ago. We sin daily in thought, word, and deed. The devil, the world, and even our own sinful flesh misleads us and deceives us into great sin and shame. This is why we are to live daily in our Holy Baptisms. We are not to think of our baptism as some event that happened years ago, and to which matters not anymore. We are to daily live in our Holy Baptisms by daily drowning the Old Adam through confession of our sins.

We daily admit that we are poor, miserable sinners, even as we admitted today in this Divine Service that we are poor sinners who are heartily sorry for them and truly repent of them. Then in faith we arise as new creations. The Holy Ghost reminds us that in Holy Baptism our sins have been washed away, and we have been forgiven on account of what our Lord + Jesus has done on our behalf.

What does our Lord + Jesus do on our behalf? First, He fulfills the Law perfectly. This is why He is led up of the Holy Ghost into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Our Lord comes to battle the devil on his own turf. He enters the enemies' territory, the wilderness of this world. This world hates the Lord + Jesus, and all those who cling to Him in faith; this world that seeks to wipe away from its surface all good teachings and instructions that lead people into the Way of Truth that they may be saved through faith in the Lord + Jesus. This world is ruled by the devil. It is the devil that the Lord + Jesus faces in the Gospel reading of the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew. Where we fail miserably, our Lord + Jesus triumphs. He does so through the Word of God. The same weapon that we have to resist temptation, but so often fail to use because of our ignorance of its teachings, or because we just plain refuse its use.

Our sinful nature loves to do what is pleasing to it. It allows the devil to use the world to mislead

and deceive our sinful flesh into great sin and shame. But our Lord + Jesus is without sin. We are full of sin, and so when temptation comes, we are prone to falling into its traps. But our Lord + Jesus is without sin. Like us He is tempted in all points, but unlike us He is tempted without sin. As the Epistle to the Hebrews declares, "For we have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Being full of sin, we cannot even comprehend this. We struggle with temptation, because we are full of sin. Our Lord + Jesus is without sin. He easily defeats any temptation that the devil throws at Him with the Word of God.

This is how the Lord + Jesus defeats the tempter's temptation in every case. "If Thou art the Son of God, [the very thing declared of the heavenly Father in the previous chapter] command that these stones become bread." The Lord's response, "Man shall not live bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." When the devil tries to twist the Word of God to make it say something it does not, something that he used in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, and what he does through all the false teachers today, our Lord + Jesus does not allow the falseness of the devil's words to stand. And when the devil offers the kingdoms of the world, in exchange for the Lord's obeisance, our Lord + Jesus sends the devil away, for He declares, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.'"

This is how the Lord + Jesus defeats the devil, through the use of the Word of God. He is able to do this because of His perfect knowledge and trust in the Word of God. This is also our tool against the temptations of the tempter. The Word of God is our defense against being led into sin. But on account of our sinfulness, we will not be able to resist every temptation, for we actually consider the sin, contemplate it, struggle with it. It sounds good to us for a moment. NO such struggle exists within the Son of God. He sees the lie for what it is and dismisses it immediately; meeting the lie of the devil with the truth of the Word of God. Our Lord + Jesus is the only One Who can defeat the devil; Who can resist the temptations of the devil. For even if we were to resist temptation ourselves, we still have the malady of original sin clinging to our flesh.

We cannot save ourselves from sin and temptation. We desire to amend our sinful lives, and when we fail, we do not turn to despair over our inability, nor do we turn to pride, dismissing our sins and temptations as something easily defeated. No, my dear friends, we turn in faith to the only source of salvation for us in this world. We turn in faith to our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ and His works and merits. For we know that we have been baptized. We know that our sins have been washed away in the waters of Holy Baptism. We know that in baptism we have put on the righteousness of the Christ, so that when our heavenly Father sees us, He does not see sin and shame, but He sees His very own beloved Son. We have been clothed with the works of the Christ.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us rejoice daily in our Holy Baptisms. For we have been claimed by our heavenly Father to be His children. We are His people. He has placed His Name upon us. Therefore, He defends and protects us against all evil. He has given His angels charge over us, to keep us in all our ways. Is this not what we pray every morning and evening when we rise and go to sleep? Is this not what we pray in Luther's Morning and Evening Prayers? "Let Thy holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me." When we call upon Him, He answers us, and He delivers us from our enemies. For our Lord God loves us, His children, and desires that we be protected from the slings and arrows of the devil. This is why He has claimed us as His own in the waters of Holy Baptism. Through Holy Baptism, we have been given an enemy in the devil. But he is no match for our heavenly Father. Indeed, the devil is no match for the Son of God, the Lord + Jesus. For our Lord and Savior has defeated the devil soundly on his own terms and in his own kingdom.

Therefore, my dear friends, we have nothing to fear from the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, for our Lord + Jesus has defeated our enemies, both by His perfect obedience to the Law of God, and

by His innocent suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross. On the cross He has paid the penalty of all our transgressions. He has paid for every time we have failed to resist the temptation of the devil. And into this death we have been baptized. So that even as the Lord + Jesus was dead and buried in the grave, so too have our sins been buried in His grave. And just as He has risen again on the third day, we rise again each new day as a new creation, when in contrition we confess our sins, and cling in faith to His works and merits. Therefore, let us cling in faith to Him and His works, for in Him is life and salvation. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee 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!