

Invocavit  
St. Matthew 4:1-11  
February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## Then Was Jesus Led Up of the Spirit

*In Nomine Iesu!*

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

### **Sermon Text:**

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

### **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.

My dear friends, there are some similarities in our Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew regarding our Lord's temptation by the devil in the wilderness, and our first parents' temptation in the Garden of Eden. Many theologians believe that the temptation of Adam and Eve was shortly after creation. The devil did not waste any time corrupting mankind. Some would even teach that this deception of the devil into sin happened on the first day of the week after creation, the day after the Sabbath rest of our Lord God. This would also mean that our Lord + Jesus defeated the devil on the first day of the week when He rose again from the dead, freeing mankind from sin and death.

Our Lord also meets the devil early on in His earthly ministry. Remember He had just been baptized by St. John the Baptist in the Jordan River. That is to what St. Matthew is referring when he begins the Gospel pericope with the word "Then." The Evangelist St. Mark uses the term "immediately" (a favorite word of St. Mark) in his Gospel. As soon as the Lord + Jesus is baptized He was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Just like our first parents, Adam and Eve, the first task for our Lord is to face the devil and his temptations into sin. So that one may not think that a perfect and sinless God incarnate may have an unfair advantage in His temptation, that is, so we do not think that He cannot be tempted like we are if He is without sin, our Lord + Jesus fasts for forty days and forty nights. He deliberately weakens Himself before He faces the devil.

St. Matthew writes that after He fasted, He hungered. He is at the same disadvantage as Adam and Eve were. They were hungry. This is why the first temptation of our first parents was a temptation for food. Both our dear Lord and our first parents are tempted of the devil first with food. Adam and Eve are tempted with the fruit from the tree in the midst of the Garden of Eden. A tree we are not told of what kind of fruit it possessed. Many people make the assumption that it was an apple. Although holy Scripture does not tell us the type of fruit. Personally, I think, if the fruit still exists at all, it was a grape vine, because it is just like our Lord God to make the instrument of our death, become the instrument

of our life and salvation. For by the wine of the Lord's Supper, which is our Lord's very Blood, we receive the remission of our sins.

As our first parents hungered and considered from what tree to eat in the Garden of Eden, the devil comes in the form of a serpent and deceives them to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Even though they had all the trees of the Garden from which to choose, they chose the tree that led to their death. They chose the tree that got them exiled from the Garden. They were cast out of the perfect Garden teeming with every plant and tree for food, into the wilderness where they would eat their bread by the sweat of their brow.

It is into the wilderness where our Lord + Jesus is led by the Spirit to face the temptation of the devil. In the wilderness our Lord fasts. He does not eat anything for forty days and forty nights. Afterward, He hungered. He did not even have bread to eat. For the devil offers Him this as a first temptation. Just like our first parents who were tempted with "being like God" and knowing good and evil, our Lord + Jesus is tempted by Satan to prove that He is the Son of God by turning stones into bread. Adam and Eve wanted to be like the Lord God. Our Lord + Jesus, Who is the Lord God in our flesh, chooses to remain the man that He is. He does not need to prove that He is both God and man. He does not need to reveal His divine nature. For He has come down from Heaven for this very purpose, to face the devil in our human flesh. Our Lord is tempted like we are, but without sin.

For, our Lord being perfect and without sin, knows the proper answer to trial and temptation. It is the Word of God, the holy Scriptures. We fail miserably when temptation comes our way, because we easily forget that we have this tool against the devil's lies and machinations. If we need an example, I am sure we could easily find one in our own lives, but we are given one from holy Scripture itself. Indeed, we have many examples from the Scriptures, even the one we just examined in Bible class with King David and Bathsheba. But there is an even better example from our first parents, Adam and Eve. We see them attempting to combat the devil's lies with the Word of God; with His command to not eat from the tree in the midst of the Garden of Eden, and get it horribly wrong. Like Satan does here to our Lord + Jesus, they distorted the Word of God. Eve was not properly catechized by her husband Adam, and she adds to what the Lord God had told them.

The devil also tries to distort holy Scripture to his own perverse means in the second temptation of our Lord + Jesus. This is one of the tools of the devil, to distort Scripture. This is why it is so important to get the teaching of the Word of God correct. This is why it is so important to have a decent translation of the Bible that does not cater to mankind's political or social whims. Many Church bodies distort the Scriptures to fit their own skewed theologies. Like the devil, they lead many into false belief and sin and shame. Satan tries to distort the Scriptures in the second temptation, even as our first parents did it of their own accord. But our Lord + Jesus sees through the temptation and easily refutes the devil. The Church has even seen fit to make the actual words of Scripture that Satan distorts part of the Propers of the day. We find these words in the Gradual.

The third temptation also bears similarity to the temptation of our first parents. For they were tempted with being like the Lord God. They were tempted with being God Himself. They did not want to just be like Him but to be Him themselves. Mankind has been doing this since our first parents. We often make ourselves out to be the Lord God. We worship ourselves. We make ourselves to be the object of devotion. We want everyone praising us, and uplifting us, and regarding us. We on the other hand have little desire to reciprocate. Our society is especially guilty of this sin. Notions of "self-care" and "self-love" are just a masking of the breaking of the First Commandment, to have no other gods beside the Lord God. We make ourselves out to be the object of our own devotion, and if others disagree with us, then they are the ones who are false and liars.

This is seen especially in the homosexual communities. They have made themselves out to be

their own gods. Everyone must bow down and worship them, or they are deemed false teachers. These have especially fallen to the lies and deceptions of the devil, whose aim has always been to get mankind to break the chief commandment of having no other gods. When we place our will above the will of the Lord God firmly established in the holy Scriptures, we reveal that we really have no use for Him, and we would rather do whatever we feel makes us feel good. If we have ourselves to worship, we have no need for the One, True, Lord God.

Satan tries to tempt our Lord + Jesus with this temptation as well. Since He is already the Lord God, the devil tries to get Lord to bow down and worship him. He offers the Lord something that he only has control of because mankind has let him have lordship over it. The devil rules this world because it is filled with our sin and shame. We allow the devil to rule over us by letting the world and our own sinful flesh dictate to us what we hear and believe. But our Lord + Jesus once again shows that He is the perfect and spotless Lamb of God come down from Heaven to fulfill the Law of God perfectly on our behalf. For unlike us in many of our temptations, unlike Adam and Eve in their temptation, unlike King David in his temptations, our Lord + Jesus correctly uses the Word of God to defeat the devil and his lies and schemes.

There is only One, True, Triune Lord God. It is only to Him we should bow down and worship. Let us, my dear friends, humble ourselves, repent of our false gods; repent of making ourselves out to be God, and rather turn in repentance to the only True Lord and Savior of us. For we sin daily and often. We fail miserably often when we are tempted. But our Lord + Jesus shows that He is greater than we are. He shows that He is greater than our first parents, Adam and Eve. For as they were tempted in the Garden of Eden, and led all of mankind into sin and death, our Lord + Jesus defeats the devil in the wilderness while He hungered. He humbles Himself to take upon Himself our flesh and redeem us. We are unable to save ourselves from the power of the devil. Our Lord defeats the devil soundly. We can now cling to Him in faith. We can cling to His works, for they are perfect and without sin.

Furthermore, we can cling to His once and for all time sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. For by it He has paid the penalty of our sins. And He gives us to eat and drink of His victory in the blessed meal He has prepared for us; the meal of His Body and Blood given to us in bread and wine. Let us then, my dear friends, come to this altar and receive the remission of our sins in bread and wine. For our Lord gives us His very self. He gives salvation to those who cling to Him in faith; those who have fallen in temptation, but look to Him in repentance for the remission of all their sins. Our Lord invites us; indeed He calls us—invokes us—to come to Him for salvation. For He is perfect and without sin. He has defeated the devil's temptations. He is the One for us poor sinners who desire to be free from the bondage of sin, free from this life in the wilderness of sin, and crave to join our Lord in the eternal Paradise and heavenly Garden in eternal life. May the Lord + Jesus grant this to us all. 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!*