

Invocavit
St. Matthew 4:1-11
March 9th, 2025
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
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.

Sermon Text:

“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.”’ ... Jesus said unto him, ‘Again it is written, “Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God.”’ ... Then saith Jesus unto him, ‘Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.”’”

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, we pray in the sixth petition of the Lord’s Prayer, “And lead us not into temptation.” This is not because our Lord God would lead us into temptation. We pray this petition really meaning, “Let us not be tempted by the devil.” This, of course, leads us into the last petition, the seventh, “But deliver us from evil.” We pray in the sixth and seventh petitions of the Lord’s Prayer that our Lord God would deliver us from temptation and the devil. Our Lord + Jesus teaches us to pray in this manner, for He knows that we fail at being tempted. We are wont to deliver ourselves into temptation and being ruled by the devil. As St. James writes, we are tempted when we give into our sinful flesh; when we give into the lusts of our heart.

Our Lord knows that we fail at temptation every time. Just like our first parents, Adam and Eve. It was the very first temptation of our first parents, in which they were tempted with food. Satan deceived them into eating from the tree in the midst of the Garden of Eden, of which our Lord God forbid them to eat. This is also the same temptation with which our Lord + Jesus is tempted by the devil in the wilderness after He had fasted forty days and forty nights. The Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew tells us that after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, the Lord + Jesus was hungry. According to our human lust, we would crave bread; we would crave any type of food.

But our Lord + Jesus is tempted without sin. Since we are filled with sin; since we are conceived and born in sin, and sin rules our lives, this is something that we can never understand in this life. We often fail when we are tempted, because we want to appease the Old Adam that lives within us. We want to appease the sinful desire that is presented before us. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, saw

that the fruit on the tree in the midst of the Garden of Eden was good for food. It looked delicious! They saw that it was good for eating, and they ate. This is how it is often with us. We are tempted with some sinful desire, and we give in. We do this because we are full of sin. We are, as we confessed earlier in the Divine Service, poor, miserable sinners. We are filled with sin from our mother's womb. But our Lord + Jesus is without sin. He is holy. He is without sin, and hates sin. Therefore, He is tempted without sin.

This is what St. Paul writes in His epistle to the Hebrews: "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." This is something we can never comprehend in this life, for the sin that infects and inheres in us, always drives us to sin. We serve our own sinful flesh. Our Lord + Jesus serves only the True God. This is how we are shown by Him how to handle temptation. His temptation by the devil in the wilderness shows us how He handled temptation. After fasting forty days and forty nights, if it was in our power, our sinful flesh would get right to commanding the stones be turned into bread. We would fill that sinful desire, right quick.

Not so with our Lord + Jesus, Who is sinless. He sees the deception of Satan for what it is. It is a leading away from the One, True God. It is a leading away from the Word of God. This is why our Lord's response to all three temptations is, "It is written." This is the pattern that we should follow with the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh when we are tempted by our enemies. We should remind them of the Lord God's Word. We have the Ten Commandments. We can examine our sins against the Ten Commandments. This is the focus of the first part of Lent. From Invocavit Sunday, today, until Laetare Sunday, the Fourth Sunday in Lent, until Passiontide, the focus of the Church, and of us, is on our breaking of the Ten Commandments. We focus on our sinfulness. We focus on how we have been tempted, and failed.

This reflection upon our breaking of the Ten Commandments should bring us back to the Word of the Lord God. This is what repentance does. It turns us away from sin and turns us back to the Lord God. After we have failed in our resistance to temptation, in our repentance, we return to the Word of the Lord God. In His Word, we see our Lord + Jesus. We see the One Who was tempted in all points, but without sin. We see the One Who when presented with a temptation to command stones to be turned into bread, deny the flesh, and turn to the Word of the Lord God.

That is the difference between One Who is without sin, and us. We are full of sin, and therefore, we often satisfy the desires of the flesh. We choose our own will over the will of the Lord God. We often choose to break the Commandments, instead of keeping them. Not so with our Lord + Jesus. He always desires to do what His heavenly Father commands. This is concept foreign to us on account of our sinfulness. Our Lord hears the temptation of the devil, and He does not entertain it at all. It is a ridiculous proposition to Him. We hear the temptation of the devil, and think, "Yeah, that sounds quite good." Our Lord God does not lead us into temptation, rather we lead ourselves into temptation.

Our Lord + Jesus, however, hears the temptation and rejects it immediately, because it is against the will of the Lord God. We rarely consider the will of the Lord God when we are being tempted. Hence, we fall into sin daily and often. This is the way it has been for mankind from the beginning. Adam and Eve were tempted with food, they saw that it was good to eat, and they took some and ate. They satisfied their sinful flesh. Our Lord + Jesus after fasting forty days and nights, and being hungry, does not turn stones into bread, because He does not possess frail, sinful, human flesh. His flesh is human, but without sin. Therefore, He turns to the Word of the Lord God. The sole source of battle with the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, when we are being tempted. Man does not live by bread alone; He lives by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord God.

Thus, the first temptation of our Lord is a temptation to satisfy the lusts of the flesh. We satisfy

our lusts, the Lord + Jesus combats it with the Word of the Lord God. The second temptation of our Lord is to question our Lord's Word and His protection. Satan twists the Word of the Lord God to say something that it does not. This also reflects the temptation of our first parents, for they were deceived into adding something to the command of the Lord God which He did not say. Eve states that they were not even to touch the tree, not just to not eat the fruit of the tree. The devil has taken our Lord + Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple, and tempted Him to jump off and prove that the Lord God will protect Him.

This is similar to the temptation of our first parents. Notice that with the first two temptations, the devil begins with questioning that the Lord + Jesus is indeed the Son of God. Adam was the son of God. Eve was His daughter. He is a tender and caring Father. He would provide for them all of their wants and needs. They did not need to eat from the tree in the midst of the Garden of Eden. Their Father would supply them with all that they needed to support their body and life. He would protect them from any danger or harm that might threaten them. Our Lord + Jesus is not just fully human, but He is also fully God. He is the Son of God. There is no question about it. He does not need to prove it by jumping off the temple.

Adam and Eve were tempted with being like God, and received to benefit from failing. Indeed, they were not blessed, but cursed to live with sin and death all their days. We too are cursed with sin and death. The Lord + Jesus again sees through the deception of the devil. The answer again to the temptation is the Word of the Lord God. Adam and Eve could have just placed their faith in the Word of the Lord God. He said not to eat from the tree, therefore, we do not eat from it. This is the response that our Lord gives to Satan's temptation to put Himself in harm's way to see if the Lord God would rescue Him with His angels. The response of our Lord + Jesus is "It is written." It is written that thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. We do not overcome the devil with miracles, or reliance on miracles, we overcome the devil through patience and long-suffering. We do nothing for display and vainglory. We humbly bear the crosses that are put before us. Just as our Lord + Jesus bore the tree of the cross to atone for the sins of the whole world.

The third temptation also reflects the temptation of our first parents. For this temptation of our Lord + Jesus is to forsake the One, True God for a false god. This is in essence what our first parents did. In listening to the devil, they rejected the Lord God, they rejected their heavenly Father, and chose the devil as their god. This has been the way of mankind from the beginning. Even the Israelites, after they had witnessed the ten plagues directed at Egypt, and seen and heard the Lord God from the fire and cloud on the mountain of Sinai, and after declaring they would serve no other gods, rejected Him, the One, True God, for a calf made of gold. This is what we do every time we give ourselves over to our sinful lusts. We reject the Lord God; we reject His commands, and choose for ourselves another god, whether that god be the devil, the world, or our own sinful flesh.

With this temptation the devil has given up challenging our Lord that He is the Son of God. He simply demands to have the Lord + Jesus worship Him. In exchange, the devil would give Him the kingdoms of the world. The temptation is to receive the world without enduring the shame and suffering of the cross. The problem, however, is that even though the devil rules the world through craft and deceit; Even though he rules the world because mankind lets him, he does not actually have possession of the world. These things do not truly belong to him. The world belongs to Him Who created it.

There is no easy path for our Creator to redeem mankind. A death must take place for breaking the Commandment of the Lord. The Lord Himself must suffer and die, as a man, to fully atone for the sins of the whole world. It is only through the innocent suffering and death after fulfilling perfectly the whole will and Law of God, that mankind can be redeemed from the devil. It is only by the cross that all men may believe that their sins have been fully paid for. It is only by the Lord + Jesus being lifted up on the tree of the holy cross that He will draw all mankind to Himself through faith. Therefore, there is no easy way to redemption of mankind. The turning away from the One, True God for the devil may be

a temptation for mankind. The desire to not be ruled by anyone but one's one will is certainly a temptation into which we have all succumbed. But our Lord + Jesus will have none of it.

There is only One, True God. He is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. He is the One into Whom we have been baptized. He is the One Who has placed His holy Name upon us. It is His Name which we hear declared throughout the Divine Liturgy. He is the One from Whom we seek forgiveness for all the times we have led ourselves into temptation. For it is He Who has rescued us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. He has defeated the devil, not just in the wilderness after fasting for forty days and nights, but our Lord + Jesus has defeated the devil, and all the powers of Hell, with His suffering and death upon the tree of the holy cross.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us continue to pray the Lord's Prayer, wherein we say, "Lead us not into temptation." For, we are tempted in all points with sin. We sin daily and much, and therefore are worthy of the Lord God's eternal wrath and displeasure. But we can cling to in faith the Lord + Jesus, He Who came down from Heaven and took upon Himself our flesh, but without sin, so that He could conquer the temptations which we could not, so that He could fulfill the Law of God, which we cannot. And He took His perfect obedience to the will and Law of the heavenly Father, and offered up His life as a ransom for ours upon the tree of the holy cross. Let us cling in faith to Him, for it is written that all those who cling to Him in faith have forgiveness of sins, eternal 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!