

Invocavit Sunday
St. Matthew 4:1-11
February 22nd, 2026
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald P. Dulas

If Thou Art the Son of God

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.

My dear friends, less than two months ago we celebrated the birth of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. We celebrated the incarnation of our Lord God. The Son of God took upon Himself human flesh, in order that He might redeem us back from the devil, and all that is evil. He humbled Himself in order to be our Savior. He weakened Himself in order that He might place Himself under His Ten Commandments, and in His weakened human estate fulfill the Law of God perfectly. He weakened Himself by becoming man—he laid aside His divinity—in order that as the Son of God He might suffer our punishment upon the tree of the holy cross. He laid aside His divinity, all of His power and authority, that He might die on our behalf, all so that He might pay the penalty of our transgressions. In His humanity, in our flesh, He would rise again from the dead, and reveal to all mankind that He had thoroughly defeated death and the devil.

This is what we began to learn less than two months ago at the beginning of the Christmas season. Throughout the Epiphany season, our Lord revealed Himself to be the Son of God, by changing water into wine, by showing His knowledge of Scripture before the elders of the temple, and by transfiguring before Sts. Peter, James, and John. In other words, in the Christmas season we saw our Lord God humble Himself to be man, and in the Epiphany season, it was revealed that He was indeed the Son of the Lord God. He was both God and man.

Now after His baptism in the Jordan River by St. John the Baptist, our Lord + Jesus is led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. St. Matthew, the Apostle and Evangelist, tells us that before His tempting by the devil, our Lord + Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights. He writes that the Lord + Jesus afterwards was hungered. What this means is that our Lord + Jesus not only faces the devil in

His weakened estate as a man—in human flesh—but He allows Himself to be tempted by the devil in one of mankind's weakest estates. When we are hungry and vulnerable. Our Lord allows Himself to be tempted by the devil in the same condition that we often find ourselves when we are tempted by the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. For we fall to temptations when we are least on guard, when our study of God's Word has fallen into disuse, and our prayers to the Lord God have been neglected. We fall to temptation when we become lazy and indolent in our reading of Scriptures and our daily devotions. Then we easily fall to the temptations of our flesh, the world, and the devil, because we have not been watchful and on guard against the slings and arrows of our spiritual enemies.

This is the condition that our Lord + Jesus chooses to face the devil. He faces the devil, the greatest of our enemies that hurl temptations at us, by humbling Himself to be man, and by fasting without food for forty days, to be in man's weakest state.

And the first thing that Satan challenges our Lord + Jesus on is whether He is the Son of God, or not. We have already established in the Christmas and Epiphany seasons that our Lord + Jesus is both God and man. The devil tries to sow doubt into the mind of our Lord. If we were the ones being tempted with whether this man was the Lord God, we would have doubts. The doubts of man plagued our Lord + Jesus all the way to the cross. It was the unbelief of mankind that nailed Him to the tree of the holy cross. But our Lord + Jesus is not tempted in the least by such an accusation. It is probably good at this point to point out that there is a difference between being tempted—to feel temptation—and to consent or agree to it. These two things are very different, as the Large Catechism declares in the Sixth Petition to the Lord's Prayer.

This is why we can say with the Apostle, our Lord + Jesus was tempted in all points, but without sin. One can feel temptation, but not consent or agree to it. Think of it this way: when we hear something that is so absurd there is no way we can bring ourselves to believe it, this is the same thing as hearing a temptation and not agreeing or consenting to it. We have still been tempted, but the temptation is so absurd that we resist it straight away. This is how it is with our Lord, the only man Who is perfect and without sin. He hears the devil's temptations, but He does not agree or consent to them. For they are absurd to Him.

The first temptation our Lord faces is to prove He is the Son of the Lord God by turning stones into bread. Our Lord does not need to prove He is the Son of God by signs and wonders. He has the Word of the Lord God which declares Him to be the Son of God; which declare Him to be the Messiah, the Christ. We have reached the point in the seminary's Psalms class where we are looking at all the Messianic psalms, the psalms that have direct Messianic fulfillment by our Lord + Jesus. And we are only looking at what our Lord + Jesus fulfilled in the Psalter, that does not include the rest of the holy Scriptures. Our Lord + Jesus fulfills the Word of God as the prophesied Anointed One of the Lord God.

The second temptation uses one of those Messianic prophecies from the Psalter, from Psalm 91. And as the devil is wont to do with mankind, he distorts the Scriptures to make it say something it does not say. Many people are drawn away with this temptation. For as had been pointed out earlier in the sermon, we are not only tempted by the devil. We are also tempted by the world, and our sinful flesh. These three spiritual enemies tempt us in different ways. Our flesh tempts us with the lusts of the flesh—the desires and pleasures of the flesh—this is often the temptation of the youth, as the Large Catechism teaches. The world tempts us with worldly pleasures: riches, fame, honor, all those things that the world has to offer. This is often the temptation of adults and those who are older than the youth, as the Large Catechism points out. Both the temptations of the flesh and the world are meant to draw us away from the Word of the Lord God and eternal, and spiritual things.

The devil, on the other hand, attacks straight out the spiritual things that lead us into heaven. He goes after those who are strong in their faith and spiritual life. He attacks us with corrupt Scriptures,

with false teaching, he uses things that lead us into doubt and despair over the blessings of our Lord God. Many people fall for his lies and deceptions; many people fall into his temptations, and are pulled away from the One, True faith—the One, True, Christian Church. He tries the same thing with our Lord + Jesus. But our Lord + Jesus finds the devil's temptations to be absurd. For our Lord + Jesus has perfect knowledge of the Word of the Lord God, and uses it to His advantage. This is why we need to be daily in the Word of God, and daily in prayer to the Lord God, that He might increase our knowledge and understanding of His Word, so that we also when tempted of the devil, do not agree nor consent to his ridiculous temptations.

The second temptation questions that our Lord + Jesus is the Son of God. It tempts Him to prove it by placing Himself in harms way and seeing if the Lord God would rescue Him. This is a similar temptation that our Lord + Jesus faces on the tree of the holy cross, when His revilers mock Him to save Himself and come down from the cross. He trusted in the Lord, let Him deliver Him, if He delights in Him. Another Messianic prophesy found in the Psalter, which is another reason to daily pray the Psalter, so that we hear and believe these Messianic prophesies of our Lord + Jesus. But Psalm 91 is not about tempting the Lord God, it is about living and being in the Lord's dwelling place. If we are in His dwelling place, He is our Refuge, and nothing can harm us. If we are in the Church, and come often to hear His holy Word, and receive His Blessed Sacraments, the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh cannot harm us at all. That is what that Psalm is about. And the Lord + Jesus, having perfect knowledge of the Scriptures, hears the devil's temptation and dismisses it right away for it is an uninformed, and ridiculous temptation.

The last temptation is the temptation that all men fall into, the temptation to have a false god. For many that god is themselves. The god of mankind is their own self. It is not far off from the worship of Satan, for he is evil, but so is mankind in their corruption and sin. When a person makes themselves their own god, the thing they want their god to do is amass great wealth, fame, and honor in this life. It is the same temptation that our Lord + Jesus is posed with. The devil is offering the Lord + Jesus the chance to have it all without the suffering and death, without pain and death. Our Lord + Jesus in His great love for us, also views this temptation as unworthy of consent or agreement. Sin must be punished. Mankind's transgressions must face the penalty of those transgressions. There must be a death.

Our Lord + Jesus is willing to offer up His life as ransom for us poor, miserable sinners. He is willing to suffer mockery, shame, and death for us, His creation. This is why He humbled Himself to take upon Himself our flesh. He came to be man in order to save us from sin and death, from the power of the devil. For He is the Son of the Lord God. He is the One Anointed by the heavenly Father to be our Redeemer and Savior. He weakens Himself for us. He lays aside His divinity, and then He fasts for forty days and forty nights to face the devil as one of us.

And He defeats the devil, for He is tempted, but does not agree, nor consent to the things by which He is tempted. In this He also proves He is the Son of the Lord God. For only the Son of God, Who is both God and man, can defeat the devil, make satisfaction for mankind. Therefore, my dear friends, let us flee to Him Who was tempted in all points, but without sin, when we face temptation. Let us pray the Sixth Petition of the Lord's Prayer often: Lead us not into temptation, for the Lord God surely does not tempt anyone, but He guards and keeps us from the temptations of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, so that they may not lead us into misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice. And when we are assailed by them, let us pray to the Lord God, our heavenly Father, and our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, that we might be forgiven of those transgression we have committed on account of our failing to resist temptation, that we may be free from sin, and obtain the crown of eternal life. 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!