

1st Sunday in Lent, Luke 4:1-13

The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness for forty days.

Deuteronomy 26;1-11

Psalm 91:12, 9-16

Romans 10:8b-13

Preached at the Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Greenville, SC, on Sunday March 6th, 2022.

From God who loves us with an everlasting love, who brings forth a new creation in Christ, who leads us by the Spirit in the wilderness: Grace and abundant mercy be with you all. Amen.

*Today's Gospel reading

speaks of Jesus being tempted by the devil in the wilderness.

Now, all of us **face temptation** in life ... and **Jesus** was no different.

The devil will try *anything* to turn us **away** from staying **focused** on God.

The devil wants us to **foolishly forfeit** our gift of eternal life by grabbing onto what is **temporary** and **tangible**. ____

Our reading today mentions **three times** that the devil tried to entice Jesus to turn from **God's plan** of salvation for *all* humankind.

The devil tried his hardest

to have **Jesus** give in to accepting the **false promise** of *self-centered greed*, that, by the world standards, would guarantee Jesus **fame** and **notability**, yet by God's standards would only result in **condemnation**.

But **Jesus** resisted these offers and **stayed true** to his calling. ____

*The first temptation mentioned

was **the devil** striving to induce **Jesus** into finding temporary fulfillment by turning a **stone** into a **loaf of bread** to satisfy his **hunger**.

The devil tempted **Jesus** to attend to Jesus' own personal needs first! ____

[How many of *us* are **tempted** in this way?

How many of *us* look out for *ourselves* **first**,

and then – *maybe* – consider the needs of our *neighbors afterwards*?...]

“One does not live by bread alone” **Jesus** told **the devil**.

There is more to life

than just focusing upon our *own wants* and **needs**, our *own hunger*.

A person will never truly **experience life**

trying to **accumulate things** for him or herself.

One does not live until one **reaches out** to others in need,

following in the examples given to us by our Lord **Jesus Christ**.

Yet it is so **tempting** for us to want to satisfy **foremost** our own **cravings**.

*... Gracious Lord, help us to refrain from giving in to this temptation.
Move us Lord to place the concerns of our neighbors ahead of our own. ____*

*In the devil's **second temptation** he offers Jesus **power**.

The devil claims that he has **authority** over the **whole world**,
and that **he** can give it to whomever he pleases.

The devil tells **Jesus**

that he would be **delighted** to place all this power into **Jesus'** hands
... with **one condition** ...

that Jesus would **reject** God and worship him. ____

[How many of **us** are tempted by **power**?

How many of **us** would give **everything** we have – including our **soul** –
to be in the position of having **power** over others? ...]

We have seen throughout history how **power** can change a person
from **reaching out** to others in **love**
into a person of **greed**, placing **unfair demands** upon their neighbors. ____

Many of us may believe that the world is truly **under** the power of the devil,
that the world is full of **evil** and **beyond hope**.

But do **not** give in to this **false accusation**!

The devil tempts us to **believe** this

in an effort to have us **throw up** our arms in **despair**

and **give up** on sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others!

The devil does **not** possess the **power** of this world!

This is our **heavenly Father's** world; **created** and **loved** by God.

As Jesus told the devil

“It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve **only** Him.’”

*... Gracious God, help us not submit to worshipping the devil
for the sake of gaining temporary power,
but rather worship You Lord*

- *The God of grace and understanding*

- *The God of forgiveness and love.*

*Help us Lord not to give in to the deceitful pledge of the devil,
but remain grounded in Your trustworthy covenant. ____*

***Third**, the devil tries to convince **Jesus** that Jesus can control his own **destiny**; that he need **not submit** himself to the **mission** of his **heavenly Father**, which was to **die** upon the **Cross** for **our sake**. ____

And in an endeavor to prove this to Jesus that nothing **unfortunate** would happen to him if he sought **selfish-control**, this time **the devil** quotes **Scripture!**

The devil reminds Jesus of verses **11** and **12** from **Psalm 91** which states: “For God will give the angels charge over you, to guard you in all your ways. Upon their hands they will **bear you up**, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”

... The devil tempts **Jesus** to go ahead and throw himself off the temple wall; to put God to **the test** and see if **what is written** in the Scriptures is **true** or not.

The devil was testing Jesus’ **faith**. ____

[How often is **our faith** tested by the devil?

How often are **we** told that we are **foolish** to believe in **God** and in what the **Scriptures** proclaim?

How many times to **we** face being **tempted** into putting God **to the test**, into **accepting** that **we** are in **complete control** of our **own destiny** and that we do not **need** Jesus in our lives? ...]

Jesus told the devil; “It is said, ‘Do **not** put the Lord your God **to the test**.’”

*... Gracious God, yes it is true that **You** tests **us** throughout our lives to **mold us** into beings of **compassion** and **love**, created in Your image. Humbly we acknowledge that we are **not** equal to you and have **no right** to put **You to the test** in an effort to **prove Your existence**. Forgive our foolishness for doing so. Indeed You **do** exist and have been revealed to us by the **Holy Spirit**, through faith in your Son **Jesus Christ**. ____*

*In today’s Gospel reading we heard **three** of the **many attempts** the devil tried in making Jesus **turn away** from his heavenly Father.

I am sure there were **other** attempts made, for our reading states:

“When the devil had finished **every** test, he departed from him until an **opportune time**.” ...

The devil will try **anything** to **tempt us** to give into **sin**; to **reject** Christ and **turn away** from our gracious Lord.

I pray that we do **not** relinquish ourselves over to the devil in an effort to gain
Temporary self-fulfillment,
Authoritarian power,
Or **selfish-control.**

Find **fulfillment** in the **promise** of Christ;
that our sin is **forgiven**, and we are **inheritors** of **eternal life!**

Rejoice together as sisters and brothers in the **power** of the **Holy Spirit**
which **leads us** to encounter the **true presence** of God in our lives,
and the **willingness** to **reach out** to others with **compassion!**

Boldly turn your lives **over** to God to **guide** you.
Find **peace** in knowing that our heavenly Father has **complete control!** ____

***All** of the devil's promises have **conditional** consequences attached to them:
If you turn this stone into bread ...
If you fall down and worship me ...
If you throw yourself from the temple wall ...

However, our Lord's **unfailing promises** are **unconditional:**
Through **faith** in Jesus Christ, by the grace of God ...
Our sin **IS** forgiven ...
Eternal life **IS** ours ...
We **ARE** children of God! ____

The devil will continue to **tempt us** throughout our earthly lives
Into accepting his **tentative proposals.**
He **returned** to test Jesus through the actions of **Judas Iscariot**
... and he will **return** time and time again to test **us.** ____

Do **not** let your guard down!
Constantly pray to **the Lord** to direct your hearts in following **his** example;
and to lead us **not** into temptation, but deliver us **from** evil. ____

Resist the offers of the devil and **stay true** to your calling in **Christ.**
Stay true to the **mission** in which we were **baptized,**
which is to **go forth** into this world,
sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ and **making disciples** of **all** people;
baptizing them ...
in the name of the **Father**, and of the **Son**, and of the **Holy Spirit.** ____

Amen.