

First Sunday in Lent – March 10, 2019
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

Luke 4:1-13 (NIV)

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, 2) where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. 3) The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." 4) **Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'"** 5) The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6) And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7) So if you worship me, it will all be yours." 8) Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" 9) The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. 10) For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; 11) they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" 12) Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 13) When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

We've gathered here today to ponder what our Lord has done for us. Our Great Deliverer defeated Satan for us and is our eternal refuge. This account took place at the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry shortly after his baptism. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Jesus spent 40 days in a desert region – a barren place not normally habitable. During this time we are told he was tempted by the devil. The temptations were ongoing just as Satan's temptations to us are ongoing. Hebrews 4:15 reminds us that **he was tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin.**

The temptations that Jesus struggled with were just as real to him as our temptations are. He was true man. Hebrews 2:18 reminds us that he suffered when he was tempted. Our text tells us that that after fasting for 40 days Jesus was hungry – again this is evidence that the temptations Jesus felt were real.

So many times when we think of this lesson, we're reminded to follow Jesus' example to resist temptations. In the 90's the Evangelical movement popularized the letters WWJD as a personal motto to remind themselves to act in a way that would demonstrate the love of Jesus. You can still purchase bracelets, bookmarks and other items with that motto today. The letters stand for the question; "What would Jesus do?" Certainly, it's not wrong for us to ask that question and to use Jesus as an example for our own behavior. But, we need to realize that unless we know and believe what Jesus has done for us that the question, "What would Jesus do," would be irrelevant. We cannot earn God's favor or forgiveness by living a Christ-like life. The real question that we need to ask is, "**What has Jesus done for us?**" Our text for today tells us:

Theme: Jesus Defeated the Devil for Us by Relying on the Word

1. He used the Word when Satan tempts him to doubt
2. He used the Word to overcome Satan's lies
3. He used the Word to combat Satan's misuse of Scripture

As we have heard, this text mentions three specific temptations that Jesus overcame for us. The devil put Jesus to the test to cause him to sin. Satan knew very well that Jesus had come to crush his power. If he could succeed in getting Jesus to sin, he would win the victory and all people would be doomed to spend

eternity in hell with him. It appears that the temptations mentioned in our text were some of the last temptations that the Devil threw at Jesus.

Satan is persistent and this text provides evidence of his persistence. It also shows that Satan loves to attack when we are weak and vulnerable. Our text told us that Jesus fasted during the 40 days he had spent in the wilderness. **He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. 3) The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."**

Satan tried to take advantage of Jesus' need for food. He used a trick that worked for him in the Garden of Eden – raising a question of doubt. In Eden, Satan asked, “Did God really say?” Here he says – if you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread. In other words, Satan is challenging Jesus to prove his identity – to set aside any doubts as to who he was by performing a miracle to take care of his hunger.

If Jesus had given in to this temptation, he would have proved that he was not the Son of God. He would have failed to trust in his Father to provide for him. He would have shown that he wasn't willing to suffer and endure pain in his role as the Savior of all.

With his reply, Jesus shows his trust in his heavenly Father to provide for his needs. In each of the temptations recorded in our text, Jesus rebuffs Satan's attacks with Scripture. **Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'"** Jesus used the Word when Satan tempted him to doubt.

God had used those words to remind the nation of Israel that they could live because he was feeding them manna by the power of his word. His words were a warning not to complain against him and his gracious provisions. It would have been easy for Jesus to give Satan a divine command to leave. But that's not what Jesus did. He could have struck him down with his divine power but he didn't do that either. Instead he relied on the written word of God. He placed his trust in his heavenly Father. That's what Jesus did for us. He used the Word when Satan tempted him to doubt to resist his temptation so he could live a perfect life for us.

You and I often try to resort to our own power and abilities to take care of our needs rather than, first of all, placing our trust in our heavenly Father. Instead of trust, we often question God's ways letting our doubts show. His perfect trust replaces our doubts. His perfect trust replaces our weakness.

Just as soon as Jesus used the Scripture to resist Satan's temptation to doubt, Satan came at him from another angle. Once again, he used a temptation similar to one which worked for him in Eden. First, he came trying to sow seeds of doubt. Next he comes with a lie. It's no wonder the Scriptures describe him as the “father of lies.” The lie is subtle. See if you can catch it. **5) The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6) And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7) So if you worship me, it will all be yours."**

The Devil is very tricky. Did you catch the lie? Satan falsely claimed that he could give the authority and the splendor of the kingdoms of this world to anyone whom he desired. That power belongs to God himself. Satan arrogantly makes promises he cannot keep. We need to bear that in mind when Satan tempts us with the wealth of this world. But sadly, we've fallen into his traps at times. We don't always look at the world as something which belongs to God. We've put riches and the pleasures of this world in the first place in our hearts – in a sense worshiping them as an idol. Perhaps we've made ungodly choices in an effort to secure worldly wealth and pleasure for our selves. We've believed Satan's lies. That's why Jesus had to endure Satan's temptations for us.

When the Devil falsely claimed that everything belonged to him and promised to give it to Jesus if he would bow down and worship him **Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"** He used the Word to overcome Satan's lies.

Jesus could have followed an approach that we sometimes follow in situations like this. We like to challenge the lie. But Jesus doesn't allow himself to enter into a debate or discussion with Satan. He overlooks the lie to get at the heart of the temptation. It is wrong to worship and serve anyone of anything in place of God – for any reason! End of the temptation.

But not for long! **9) The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. 10) For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; 11) they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"**

Here we see just how shameless Satan is! He's not afraid to use the temple itself in the holy city as a place to tempt Jesus. He even misuses God's word to serve his own needs. In his first temptation, Satan tested Jesus' trust in the Father's care to provide for his bodily needs. Here he asks Jesus to prove his trust in God's saving power. Of course, Satan also ended up twisting Scripture by omitting a few words. There is no place in Scripture that promises us that we can put God's promises to the test by exposing ourselves to reckless danger.

Once again, Jesus gets right to the point. He didn't even bother to point out that Satan had misquoted the Scriptures in which God promises to keep us in all our ways. Instead, Jesus used another section of Scripture to show that he understood this Scripture properly. **Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"** Jesus used the Word to combat Satan's misuse of Scripture

The Devil had challenged Christ to test God's promises to see if they were really true. In the Old Testament, we often hear how the Israelites would not believe God's promises unless they could see it for themselves. Whenever we make demands on God rather than patiently and humbly praying not my will but yours be done we're guilty of the same kind of lack of trust that the Devil wanted Jesus to show. A false trust is just as bad as a lack of trust. Both are contrary to Scripture. Jesus overcame both of them for us: He used the Word to combat Satan's misuse of Scripture.

After this, our text tells us that, **"When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time."** He would be back again. We know of course that in spite of his best efforts Satan never was successful in his efforts to get Jesus to sin. We have a perfect Savior.

But that does not stop Satan from trying to get us to sin. He attacks us in much the same ways as he attacked Christ. And he will attack us again and again. Let's review those temptations once more so that we can be on the look out for them in our lives. As we do so, let's not forget that Christ has taken our place and defeated Satan for us. When Jesus was weak and hungry Satan offered an easy way to ease his suffering. Jesus knew the way to glory for him would be a difficult one, Satan offered an easier path. He came as a friend. He even used Scripture to challenge Christ's faith. Yet behind this outward show of concern, his claims of power, and his use of Scripture was the father of lies. He had nothing but evil in mind.

Our Great Deliverer defeated Satan for us and is our eternal refuge. Now when he comes with his temptations we can appeal to Jesus victory. We can flee to Jesus for refuge and protection as we use the same word that Jesus used to repel his attacks. We do this not to win God's favor but to express our appreciation for the wonderful blessings we enjoy because Jesus is our Savior from sin. Amen.