

## **“Lessons from the Wilderness” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Lent 1**

### **March 9, 2025**

- I. **Luke 4:1-13** – Previously read
- II. **Our Lord Jesus** faces a full-on assault from satan in our Gospel lesson today.
  - a. He has just been baptized... and as I mentioned last week, the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove and the Father spoke from heaven, “You are My beloved Son, with You I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:22)
  - b. The first thing that happens after He is baptized?
    - i. It says, “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil.” (vv 1-2)
    - ii. After this wonderful event of baptism and the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, something needed to take place first – 40 days in the wilderness being tempted by satan.
    - iii. There, Jesus walked the walk... no one had ever faced satan and won... but Jesus was the first human to resist the temptations of the devil and not fall for anything.
      - 1. The devil threw everything he could at Jesus – but did not win.
  - c. We can learn some lessons from the attacks and temptations of satan – and how difficult it was for Jesus.
    - i. First of all, Jesus was hungry – which can make a person easily thrown off emotionally.
      - 1. You’ve probably heard the word, “hangry” which is hungry and angry – mainly because when we are starving it’s easy to get mad... and when we are mad, we aren’t thinking straight.
    - ii. Second, Jesus was tired from wandering around in the extreme temperatures, and I can’t imagine He was getting a good night’s sleep.
    - iii. Third, Jesus was all alone... I’ve heard a saying that when we are alone and thinking a lot... that we are behind enemy lines.
      - 1. Trying to keep our minds from going all over the place – and falling for temptations – is much more difficult when we are by ourselves.
    - iv. Satan used all these things against Jesus, as he tempted Him with food, power, and riches that would immediately take the suffering away.
      - 1. Jesus remains steadfast, using the Scriptures to reject the temptation to trust in anything other than His Father.
      - 2. Not only does He remain steadfast, but again, He won the battle that Adam and Eve failed – He said “no” to the devil... He defeated the old evil foe.
- III. **I wish we** could say the same when it comes to falling for satan’s temptations.

- a. It's amazing how many ways the devil is at work as he tries to turn us away from our God and Savior.
- b. In our most recent Confirmation class, we are studying the Lord's Prayer, and we just learned the 6<sup>th</sup> Petition, "lead us not into temptation."
  - i. From the Small Catechism: "*What does this mean?* God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory."<sup>1</sup>
- c. The source of sin in us and the world's evil is satan, so he is constantly lying, tricking, threatening, accusing, and tempting us... because he knows our weaknesses.
  - i. When we are hungry, he doesn't tempt us with candy or ice cream... he tempts us to be unloving or rude to those around us.
  - ii. When we are angry, he doesn't tempt us to scowl... he tempts us to lose control and strike out at others.
  - iii. When we are lonely, he doesn't tempt us to mope around... he tempts us to think we are unlovable and not worth being around.
  - iv. When we are tired, he doesn't tempt us to take an afternoon nap... he tempts us to leave everything behind and walk away from our responsibilities and vocation.
  - v. Satan wants us to fail our Lord time and time again so that we become worried that maybe God won't forgive me this time... which is another way of saying he accuses us of being unforgiveable.
- d. Unfortunately, we are often ill-equipped to do battle with our sinful nature, the world, and the devil.
  - i. As much as we know the Word of God is an amazing sword in the battle, we don't spend time in our Bibles.
  - ii. We waste incredible amounts of time scrolling through stories and social media posts – or maybe watching TV – which rarely supports our spirit and walk with the Lord... and often fills our minds with the lies which tempt us.
  - iii. We put ourselves in all kinds of positions to fall for temptations, and then we wonder why we fell for it...
- e. Michele and I spent several weeks reading a book from C.S. Lewis called *Mere Christianity*... a series of short reflections... and here is what he had to say about temptations:
  - i. "No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good. A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting it, not by giving in. A man who gives in to

temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in. We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it.”<sup>2</sup>

- ii. The truth is, we are like St. Paul as he writes about his struggles with sin in Romans 7, “<sup>15</sup> For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. <sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

<sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!  
(Romans 7:15, 19, 24-25)

- iii. We give in... we fail... we do what we know is wrong... and this elevates what Jesus did in the wilderness to another level – as He never gave in for a moment while trusting in His Father.

#### IV. **Jesus our Savior defeated satan so we don't have to.**

- a. The burden and weight of fighting the temptations of satan are real, but the battle has been won – Jesus endured the very worst and remained perfect.
- b. From this First Sunday in Lent, we are reminded of Jesus' journey to the cross and empty tomb... and all along the way, He was not only tempted to sin, but to run away from His fate in Jerusalem.
  - i. The devil would surely win if he could get Jesus off track from the plan of our Father to give His only Son to pay for our sins.
  - ii. You see, without Jesus' dying on the cross, we are left in our sins... we are left without forgiveness... which means we are separated from God forever.
  - iii. That's the devil's goal for all of us, but all praise and thanksgiving to Jesus for winning the day – for dying on the cross in our place, and lifting the weight of sin and satan off of us.
  - iv. We do not fight evil alone, we have the power of Christ and Holy Spirit with us at all times... and satan cannot overpower us.
- c. I read where a little boy walked home after school each day, but he was afraid of a dog that barked and growled... and would run the length of his chain until it jerked him back.
  - i. The little boy was sure the chain would break one day, so he always hurried by... until one day the owner brought the dog out to the end of the drive with a leash on.
  - ii. The owner explained that this dog can't bite you, as he pulled up its cheeks – the dog had no teeth! <sup>3</sup>
- d. That is devil in our lives, powerless to take us away from God... because with Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit – we win...
- e. Our Lenten journey has just begun, but remember, the power of Christ and His victory is ours in the battle against all temptation.

- f. As we take this journey through the wilderness, we are never left to fight alone... we have Christ on our side, and with Him, the battle's already won! Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Luther. (2017). Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (p. 269). Concordia Publishing House.

<sup>2</sup> C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, book 3, chapter 11

<sup>3</sup> Source: Steve Poe, Creatures of Habit, (Nelson Books, 2021), pp. 87-88