

February 14, 2016  
Luke 4:1-13

Lent 1C  
Tempted!!

*Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Lenten King. Amen.*

You've been there before. You've been in the wilderness. You've been at your limits with patience. Perhaps you've had one of those "weeks" where nothing seems to go right. Personal issues, professional issues, familial issues and so much more. You are at your wits end. This is when Satan attacks. Temptation often comes not at your strongest, but your weakest moments. When you've reached the limits, that's when you are tempted to be unchristian. That's when you are tempted to open your mouths. That's when you are tempted to find something to help you with the weakness, with the pain, with the emotional distress.

In the text, Satan comes to Jesus after he fasted for forty days. Jesus is rightfully hungry. He's weak. That's when Satan steps in. Satan tempts Jesus to put his trust in himself, to trust in Satan, to go quickly to unbelief and separate himself from the Father. For it is true, Satan's ultimate goal is unbelief. Rev. Dr. Kou Seying says it clearest: "The first commandment is where Satan ultimately wants to undo us." It's true, Satan wants to attack our very core. He wants for us to trust in something other than the true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This is what Satan does. It's what he's been doing from the very beginning. Satan tempted Adam and Eve that they would be like God knowing good and evil. They were essentially promised authority. Satan did the same thing to the Children of Israel. At their weak moments in the wilderness, he lured them into building a false god, to complaining that God wasn't taking care of them. There were points that they even tested Him.

This is the exact same tactic that Satan uses on Jesus in today's text. He's obviously weak, he hasn't eaten for 40 days. He's hungry, he needs something to fill up. That's when Satan shows up... "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread." Then there's the authority issue when Satan tempts Jesus a second time: *"To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. <sup>7</sup> If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."*<sup>1</sup> In both of these temptations Jesus responds with God's Word. *"Man shall not live by bread alone."* And *"You shall worship the Lord your God and Him alone shall you serve."* Satan amps up his tactics and does this: *<sup>9</sup> And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, <sup>10</sup> for it is written,*

*" 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,'*

*<sup>11</sup> and*

*" 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.' "*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Lk 4:6–7). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Lk 4:9–11). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Satan is even twisting God's Word's. He did this to Adam and Eve as well. Jesus responds once again with the written Word of God. *"It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*<sup>3</sup>

Just like Jesus, you and I are tempted. Satan comes at us when we are weak, when we are in the wilderness, thirsty and hungry. Unlike Jesus, and just like the Children of Israel we fall to temptation more than we would like to admit.

As we live in the wilderness, it's a fact we sin. You and I sin on a daily basis. Satan knows how to tempt us. Luther writes about this in the Large Catechism: "Temptation is of three kinds: of the flesh, of the world, and of the devil." You and I we live in the flesh. The flesh that we live in is fallen. Luther goes on to write: "For we live in the flesh and carry the old creature around our necks; it goes to work and lures us daily into unchastity, laziness, gluttony and drunkenness, greed and deceit, into acts of fraud and deception against our neighbor—in short, into all kinds of evil lusts that by nature cling to us and to which we are incited by the association and example of other people and by things we hear and see. All this often wounds and inflames even an innocent heart."<sup>4</sup> That old creature that will not be fully buried until the Lord returns is difficult to live with. Satan uses the temptations of the flesh for his benefit, to get us to fall, to hurt our relationships with other, whether that be with spouse, child, parent, friend, coworker, teammate, classmate, teacher, student, fellow congregation member. Satan tempts us with food, drink, money, and so much more when it comes to things of the flesh. These things will hurt us on the inside.

Satan then uses the world to tempt us. Luther writes about this in the Large Catechism: "Next comes the world, which assails us by word and deed and drives us to anger and impatience. In short, there is in it nothing but hatred and envy, enmity, violence and injustice, perfidy, vengeance, cursing, reviling, slander, arrogance, and pride, along with fondness for luxury, honor, fame, and power. For no one is willing to be the least, but everyone wants to sit on top and be seen by all."<sup>5</sup> With the world Satan tempts us to be number one. With these temptations we also fall. In weakness, we use our words to hurt others. We've all done it, we've done it to each other. TO those of you I've hurt with my words, I'm sorry and I plead for your forgiveness. This one more so then the first will hurt our relationships with others, when we fall.

Luther goes on to speak about the temptations from the devil. Really his ultimate goal. "Then comes the devil, who baits and badgers us on all sides, but especially exerts himself where the

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<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Lk 4:12). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

<sup>4</sup> Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (pp. 453–454). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

<sup>5</sup> Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (p. 454). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

conscience and spiritual matters are concerned. His purpose is to make us scorn and despise both the Word and the works of God, to tear us away from faith, hope, and love, to draw us into unbelief, false security, and stubbornness, or, on the contrary, to drive us into despair, denial of God, blasphemy, and countless other abominable sins. These are snares and nets; indeed, they are the real “flaming darts” that are venomously shot into our hearts, not by flesh and blood but by the devil.<sup>6</sup> Satan’s ultimate goal for you and I is unbelief. As he leads us into the temptations of the flesh and of the world, he’s ready to pounce and cause us to trust in something other than our true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We are tempted on all sides from Satan, just as Jesus Christ was...but yet Jesus does not fall. He uses the Word of God, the Sword of the Spirit as His weapon of offense. Satan cannot stand to the true Word of God. He may take it out of context, but when used truthfully he cannot stand. The Devil will fall.

As our text concludes, we read this: <sup>13</sup> *And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.* <sup>7</sup> The devil left him for a more opportune time. Here in the wilderness Jesus is weak physically. We are journeying in the wilderness called Lent...we are going to meet Jesus at the “more opportune time”.

In his novel, *The Chain*, Paul Wellman shared a stimulating story attributed to people of the South. It is known as the “Fourth temptation.” According to this beautiful legend, after Jesus had emerged victoriously from His wilderness temptations; after living courageously and triumphantly throughout His ministry, after His apostles failed, enemies and friends conspired in crime; then, while Jesus was hanging in excruciating pain on the cross, the devil returned and whispered in His ear, “They aren’t worth it, Lord.” It was then, according to the story, that the Master was heard to say, “Father, forgiven them; for they know not what they do.”

It’s a legend, but yet when we think of our temptations. We are tempted when we are weak. Jesus was weak physically. He was in great physical pain. He was in great emotional pain. His friends had betrayed him, denied him, and ran away from him. Insults were being thrown at him. His own Father had even left Him on the cross. Not only that, but He was in great spiritual anguish. He had the sins of the world on His back, which that caused His Father to leave Him. It was there on the cross where Jesus is conceivably at His weakest point. He had people tell him again, “If you are the Son of God, save yourself, come down from the cross.” In essence Satan did say, “They’re not worth it. I want them.” Yet the Savior of the World cries out, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

Indeed, as Jesus is tempted and defeats Satan with His Word, the Word written and the Word Spoken and the Word made flesh. He defeats Him for you. He was in the Wilderness for you.

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<sup>6</sup> Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (p. 454). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

<sup>7</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Lk 4:13). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

He is in the wilderness with you. He is suffering in the wilderness because you are in the wilderness.

You see, Jesus cannot stay in heaven's peace and glory while you are here suffering and being tempted and sinning. If you lose all things, he loses all things. If you starve and sweat and squirm, he, too, must starve and sweat and squirm. If you suffer condemnation, he suffers condemnation. If you are to die, he must die too. He loves you too much to leave you here in sin's wilderness, this world—even with the bright excitements and occasional splendor and excellent advertising—all of Satan's tempting disposal. While "this world's prince may still scowl fierce as he will," Jesus is "by your side upon the plain" where you are and where the fight is. And Jesus will do the fighting himself—hang on a tree, rise from the dead, ascend! – he "holds the field forever."

So something more is happening here: wherever Jesus walks in this wilderness, new life springs up. Your life. Life from heaven—from God to you. Like a leafy green tree heavy with fruit in the middle of a desert where you didn't expect it. A tree of life to *eat* from, and so to eat and get life—after the Garden of Eden tree is long gone. And he is a spring of life-giving water, bubbling up in the middle of your desert—shouting out defiantly against Satan and his carefully cultivated drought all around you. Jesus *shouts* his Word: **FORGIVEN!**

Jesus suffers, Jesus starves. Jesus wanders in this bitter forty-day wilderness for one reason: YOU ARE HERE! But he's not here to empathize with you—just to say, "This is pretty bad, isn't it?" He's here to finally get you out of here, to re-create you, and take you back to heaven to his Father. That's why the Holy Spirit led him to your spot, to the desert, to be tempted like you are. And so he brings life down from heaven, healing for you—for your hurt mind, your heart, your bruised and battered body and soul—the whole of you. God "Authored" YOU. Satan tempts you. Sin wrecks you. So death claims you. But Christ heals you of death, forgives and perfects you.

His water is the only water in the wilderness that will save you. So he says, "I baptize you with it...in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." And his food is the only food that will nourish you "to life everlasting," so "Take eat, this is my body...given...for you. And my blood shed...for you...forgiveness." Here is life from heaven in *this* wilderness. Here is deliverance from Satan "and all his works and all his ways." Here is cleansing from your sin! Here is deliverance from your temptations...even as we pray... "Lead us not into temptation."

In Jesus Name. Amen.

*Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.*