

Invocavit - the First Sunday in Lent

Hymns: 34, 148, 306, 47

(omit Gloria, responses before & after the Gospel reading, and other ascriptions of praise during Lent.)

The INTROIT

(Ps. 91:15,16,1)

P: He shall call upon Me, and I will answer Him;

C: I will deliver him and honor him.

P: With long life will I satisfy him;

C: and show him My salvation.

P: He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High;

C: shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

(The "Gloria in Excelsis" is omitted during the Penitential Season of Lent)

The COLLECT

O Lord, mercifully hear our prayer and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to defend us from them that rise up against us; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

Genesis 3:1-24 (NKJV)

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; "but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"

So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

So the LORD God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life.

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”

To the woman He said: “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.”

Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.”

And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”; therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

The GRADUAL

(Ps. 91:1-2,4,11-12)

P: For He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways.

C: **They shall bear thee up in their hands lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.**

P: He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

C: **I will say of the Lord, He is my Refuge and my Fortress; my God, in Him will I trust. He shall cover thee with His feathers and under His wings shalt thou trust.**

The EPISTLE

2 Corinthians 6:1-10 (NKJV)

We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: “In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

The SENTENCE for the Season

(Philippians 2:8)

P: *Christ has humbled himself, and become obedient unto death:*

C: *even the death of the cross.*

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are 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 proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"

Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Matthew 4:1-11 — "To Be Tempted by the Devil"

INTRODUCTION

- I. UPON EVERY UTTERANCE
- II. YOU WILL NOT TEMPT
- III. HIM ONLY WILL YOU SERVE

CONCLUSION

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Matthew 4:1-11 — “To Be Tempted by the Devil”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Today is Invocavit, the First Sunday in Lent, and the appointed Gospel reading is Matthew 4:1-11:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are 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 proceeds from the mouth of God.’”

Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’”

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Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’” Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

Today’s Gospel declares to us the blessings of temptation. That sounds strange to our ears. After all, how can temptations be understood as blessings. Yet that is what is held before us today. For our sake, the Lord Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted or tested by the devil. This was after Jesus had been baptized for us so as to fulfill all righteousness. The Lord Jesus was led out into the wilderness, where the devil would seek to lead Him off the path of our salvation, just as the devil tries to lead us off that path. Jesus was led into the wilderness to face our temptations for us and to overcome them once and for all. Jesus was led into the wilderness to show us the way through our temptations. He was led into the wilderness so that we would see the One who is the way through our temptations. By this we are taught that we are not to imagine that we must be strong in the face of temptations, but rather that we must look to the One who has overcome our temptations for us. When we look to Jesus as the strong one, when we rely not upon ourselves or anything that we can find or make or do for ourselves, then we know that our salvation is secure. Then we know that the devil has no power over us. Then the Word of God is our life, and we know that the Word of God cannot fail.

I. UPON EVERY UTTERANCE

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”

Was this the first time that the tempter tested Jesus? It is the first time that is recorded that the devil came to Jesus directly. Surely temptations surrounded Jesus throughout His life. Surely temptations surrounded Jesus for the full forty days and nights of His fasting in the wilderness. But this is the first time that we are told that the devil came directly to Jesus to tempt Him by overt means. Perhaps it happened before, but if it did, we are not told about it, and according to the wily ways of the devil it would seem likely that this is the first time and perhaps the only time that he confronted Jesus directly. Direct assault is the devil’s least effective way. He is much more effective when he works through means.

But in this case the devil goes straight to his wicked ploy. It is interesting to note that he waited until after Jesus had completed His time of fasting. This is one of the very clever and devious ways that the devil works. During the time of fasting, Jesus would not have been as easily tempted. The very purpose of a fast is to help a person to become more focused. So the devil waits until the fast is over, when it appears that the person has accomplished something good and it appears as though victory has been won. Then the devil comes, either directly or through the flesh or through other people or through other worldly means. Then the devil craftily praises the sons of God and tempts them to go forth in the power of their personal victory and their personal authority.

This is the temptation that was presented to Jesus. **“If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”** If you are the Son of God . . .

This word for if can sometimes also be used for “since.” Moreover, no article is supplied with son so that this may also properly read, **“Since you are a son of God.”** Do you see how this really does apply to us as our temptation? Jesus was being tested not only as a man, but as our Savior. For He came to the world and He was led into the wilderness to be tempted on our behalf with our temptations so as to save us from our sins and to deliver us from the evil one.

How often we face this temptation in our lives! Even when the devil does not tempt us directly, our own flesh raises this same postulation. **“Since I am a son of God, why should I ever have to do without? Has God not promised me His grace and every blessing? Has He not promised to provide for my every need of body and soul? Surely, since I am a son of God, I should be successful and prosperous, surrounded with good friends and happy family, and without any lack of good and enjoyable things.”**

This temptation is especially strong after we have had some form of success. When our plans have gone well and when our prayers all seem to have been answered in the way that we like, suddenly we begin to feel empowered and nearly invincible. And this is when our guard is dropped, for we have begun to rely no longer upon the one who is our God and have begun to trust in ourselves and our own successes and the worldly blessings.

Sometimes, even our spiritual blessings can work against us. Sometimes even the notion of having succeeded in resisting temptation can lead us into temptation. Sometimes having completed a planned reading of the Bible or having completed a devotional series or having

made a new discovery from the Scriptures can lead us into temptation. Or rather, the false pride of such accomplishments and the false security of thinking that these are our own personal accomplishments can lead us into temptation. Then also, we can become so focused upon counting our blessings that we imagine ourselves more blessed than others and climb to the mount of spiritual superiority.

The problem with any of these dealings is that we have been turned from looking to Jesus as our confidence to ourselves or something else in our lives as our confidence. Jesus is the one upon whom all our hopes rest. He is the Word of God. So as we journey forward through our appointed path in life, we need always look to Jesus. He is the reason that our temptations have no power to bring us down. He is the one who accomplished our victory.

And so, he declared for us the way of victory. **“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”** Literally,

Stands written, “Not upon bread only will live a man, but upon every utterance that out-journeys through a mouth of God.”

This is truly amazing. Bread, that after which every man toils and sweats and worries, is not sufficient for the life of a man. Upon the things of the flesh a man cannot survive. Jesus had proven this for the last forty days and nights. The bread and sustenance for which a man works, or even what may be provided on occasion without work, is not enough for life. What a person puts into his mouth is only part of what is needed. More importantly is what has entered the heart and comes back out of the mouth. This is why Jesus says first, **“It stands written.”** The source for all Christian knowledge is the Holy Scriptures. When what God has declared for us and has recorded for our consumption has indeed become ingested and digested, then this also is reiterated by a mouth of God, by the mouths of God’s sons, so that by these utterances God’s sons live.

And before we leave this, there is a very important little word that we must remember. That word is EVERY. Every utterance matters. Everything that is confessed by a Christian must be in accord with the doctrine that stands written. Otherwise, rather than producing true faith by which the just shall live, that blessed faith dies and leaves the person with only his own bread which will fail him in the end.

II. YOU WILL NOT TEMPT

As if the first temptation was not crafty enough, having been defeated by the Lord Jesus and His reliance upon the utterances that flow from the right doctrine of the Scriptures, the devil comes forward with another temptation.

Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’”

Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’”

Oh is this ever crafty. This is truly clever. The devil is truly the master of deception and subtle deviation. **“Since You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest**

you dash your foot against a stone.”

What an amazingly clever twist this is. How the devil loves to tempt us with our own faith. **“OK Christian. Show me how much you really trust God!”** Oh boy. This one really throws a person off guard. **“Where is the evidence of your faith? Show me.” “Why should you be afraid to take this risk? Don’t you believe the Scriptures?”**

This temptation comes in another form, too. **“Hey Christian! Since you trust in God, where’s the evidence? Where is your success? Why do you need to confess your sins all the time? Why do you see so many sins in your life? Shouldn’t you be making some kind of progress in your sanctification?”**

Jesus gives the answer that leaves the tempter powerless, **“You will not out-test the LORD, the God of you.”** What this means is that since the LORD has declared us to be righteous, we will not try to prove His declaration. We will simply rely upon His declaration of righteousness and live according to it. Rather than putting the LORD’s declaration to the ultimate test, rather, the faith that has been generated in us will be counted by us as sufficient. We will believe the faith that we were given in our Baptism. We will believe the sanctification that is worked not by us, but by the Holy Spirit. We will believe that the grace of our Lord Jesus is sufficient for us, and not try to outdo what He has already accomplished. Rather, by the faith generated and renewed through the means of grace, we will walk in the Spirit. When our trust is in what God declares, the devil has nothing more to bring against us. He cannot defeat God’s declaration of mercy.

III. HIM ONLY WILL YOU SERVE

But the devil proves his craftiness with yet one last and very powerful ploy. This one is so effective and cleverly disguised that nearly all of Christendom has accepted it.

Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”

Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’” Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Why did Jesus come to the world? He came to rescue sinners from the rule of the devil. Yet from eternity the Lord Jesus knows that only a tiny remnant shall actually receive the salvation that He purchased and won for all the world. Only a fraction of the world will actually enter again into the kingdom of God through the means by which this must happen. At certain times Jesus cried and lamented this sad fact.

To this dilemma the devil presents an alternative. **“Look!”** he says, **“Look at all the kingdoms of the world! Look at all those people who are not believing the Gospel! So many are going to be lost! Don’t you want them to be saved? Do you really want to stick to this narrow way by which so many people will be lost forever?”**

Oh what emotions this produces! Oh how the heart breaks! So what is the proposal? **“OK, so you want everyone to be saved. Your way will not make that happen. Sure, the sins of the world are paid for, but most people will not receive that payment for themselves. So here, just this once, in just this one way, make a tiny change in the means of salvation.**

Just change the way in which the Church is gathered, and all the world will come to you!"

To this clever and very reasonable proposition the Lord Jesus says, **"It stands written, "For to the LORD, the God of you, will you bow, and Him only will you serve."**"

The only one whom we will trust so as to bow to is the LORD our God. No one else has anything of value to say to the Church. No one else can provide the means for salvation. No one else can provide a way to bring the lost into the kingdom of God. To Him alone we bow and subject ourselves in faith.

It is His service or ministry by which the Church exists and continues. This word for service is very specific and describes the manner for worship that is prescribed in the Scriptures. It is of the same derivation from which we have the word Liturgy. The Liturgy that we have received, the Liturgy that is the fulfillment of the Old Testament worship that kept the people in expectation of the promise of the Seed, later also named as Messiah or Christ, is the same Liturgy that now keeps us in expectation of the Christ who has come and continues to be with those who are baptized into Him in His Church. Jesus says that no alternate form of worship can win the world. Jesus declares that no other gathering of people into the Church other than the Liturgy of the Pure administration of the Gospel and the Sacraments can bring about the salvation of the world's lost ones.

By means of this divine liturgy the Lord Jesus commanded, **"Depart Satan!"** The devil had no more responses and he departed.

CONCLUSION

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom and the power and glory forever. Amen.

This is how we are to pray. Like our Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit leads us into the wilderness from our baptism to face the temptations that will surely surround us. Yet we are not led into the temptations. That is a choice that we make when we begin to rely upon our own reason and strength to try to remain faithful. Rather, we need to rely upon the one who has already defeated every temptation along with the Tempter himself. So often we think that resisting the devil means to try to fight against him and the temptations that he presents before us. But rather, we need to hear what St. James teaches,

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. (James 4:7-8)

Notice that this is exactly what Jesus did in defeating the tempter for us. He submitted unto God. Even Jesus did not face our temptation by His own power, but rather, submitted unto God. Jesus, who Himself is God, submitted unto God to defeat the devil. Jesus, who stood in our place, had to defeat the devil for us using the utterances of God. He submitted to God and trusted that God's Word is God's power for salvation.

For us it is even easier, for all that we need to remember is that Jesus has already defeated the devil and all of our temptations. All that we need for our safety God supplies us in the means of grace. When we face temptations, God has provided the means of escape. He has provided us the gathering unto the means of grace, where the devil is left with nothing but his own growling

and roaring. His roars are silenced by the divine liturgy so that all we hear is the blessed declaration of God that for Jesus' sake we are declared righteous and judged as coheirs with Jesus. Truly, what more could we need? In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.