

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

If it feels like you're experiencing a bit of déjà vu today, it might be because of the Gospel lesson. We read the account of Jesus' baptism at the beginning of the Epiphany season, and we read the end of today's lesson a couple weeks later and pondered Jesus' preaching ministry.

Our focus today will be especially on those middle two verses of today's Gospel on the temptation of Jesus. It's customary. We always think on Jesus' temptation on the First Sunday in Lent, and that means something. Those actions of Jesus that find their way into all three Synoptic Gospels — Matthew, Mark, and Luke — must surely be significant. Thus, the Holy Spirit made sure to include them.

Jesus' temptation in Mark's Gospel is described in only two verses. I had hoped my sermon would follow Mark's lead. But alas ...

Jesus' public ministry began with His baptism, and it began with some urgency. "*Immediately,*" after His baptism, Mark says, Jesus saw the heavens torn open and the Spirit come down to anoint Him as the Christ. And Jesus heard the Father's voice from heaven declaring Him to be the "*beloved Son*" of God. Again "*immediately*" the same Holy Spirit cast Jesus out into the wilderness. His ministry now begun, things began to happen quite fast. Our salvation was Jesus' sole purpose.

Thus the Holy Spirit cast Jesus out into the wilderness, immediately after being declared God's beloved Son. Here we might see Jesus in the role of the second Adam. You remember that God was pleased with the first Adam, made in His image; yet, you also remember that Adam was tempted and ate from the forbidden tree. He sinned and so brought death upon mankind. Therefore, "*the LORD God sent [Adam and Eve] out from the garden of Eden*"; "*He drove out the man,*" out of the garden and into the wilderness (Gen. 3:23-24).

Jesus, the second Adam, recapitulates this scene with God speaking His express pleasure with His Son, and by His Spirit driving Jesus out into the wilderness to be tempted by "the old evil foe" of Jesus' forebear (LSB656:1).

The big difference, of course, is that the second Adam did not fail where the first one did. The first Adam was cast out of Eden as a transgressor; the second Adam was cast into the wilderness not a transgressor Himself, yet bearing the sins of the world. As St. Paul said, God "*made him to be sin who knew no sin*" (2 Cor. 5:21).

How interesting that Mark only mentions that Jesus was tempted throughout His forty day sojourn in the wilderness. He doesn't mention Jesus' forty day fast and His hunger; he doesn't mention Satan's various attacks. Even more interesting

is that Mark doesn't even mention Jesus' victory over these temptations, as Matthew and Luke do. You know them: "Turn these stones into bread"; "man shall not live by bread alone." "Throw yourself down from the temple and let the angels bear you up"; "Don't tempt the Lord." "I'll give these kingdoms to you if you bow down and worship me"; "Worship only God and serve Him alone"!

Jesus' wilderness defeat of Satan is proclaimed elsewhere in Scripture ... in Hebrews, for example: "*Jesus, the Son of God,*" is "*one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin*" (Heb. 4:14-15). Again, Jesus shares in our "*flesh and blood,*" partaking "*of the same things*" that burden us, suffering "*when tempted,*" so that He might "*help those who are being tempted*" (Heb. 2:14, 18). As we sing in Lent: Jesus, "You strove with Satan, and You won; Your faithfulness endured" (LSB418:2).

Which is why Jesus fought this battle with Satan in the wilderness, and why His victory is so important. It wasn't to show us how to live a victorious life, warding off Satan's flaming darts with the Word of God. Jesus taught, "*[t]emptations to sin are sure to come*" (Luke 17:1) — stumbling blocks to our faith. Not even Jesus' disciples could keep from failing. Jesus told them, "*Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*" (Mark 14:38). St. Paul said it this way of himself: "*I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ... I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing*" (Rom. 7:18-19). We are the same ... sinners from birth, born in sin and with the inclination to sin (Augsburg Confession, II:1), "*lured and enticed by [our] own desire[s].*"

To be sure, we are in a cosmic war "*against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places*" (Eph., 6:12). Devils fill the world; and they may not "overpower us," but think not that you can stand unwounded by this wily foe's "Deep guile and great might." "On earth is not his equal." "With might of ours can naught be done, Soon were our loss effected," Luther penned (LSB656:1, 2).

"But," he continued, "for us fights the valiant One, Whom God Himself elected. Ask ye, Who is this? Jesus Christ it is, Of Sabaoth Lord, And there's none other God; He holds the field forever" (LSB656:2). Yes, Jesus, the second Adam, fought this battle with Satan for our sake, living in perfect obedience to God in our place, because we utterly fail. In catechism terms, we call this Jesus' active obedience. He is the perfect fulfiller of "*the Law [and] the Prophets,*" (Matt. 5:17), so that He might be for us the spotless Lamb of God sacrificed for the sins of the world, going willingly to the cross for us — we call this Jesus' passive obedience, and all this to accomplish our salvation (Matt. 5:18; John 19:30). The second Adam did it that we

might receive from Him full remission of our sins, that *“in him we might become the righteousness of God”* (2 Cor. 5:21).

Paul writes brilliantly of this failure of the first Adam and the success of the second, and what it means to us. The first Adam’s *“one trespass led to condemnation for all men,”* but the second Adam’s *“one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s [the first Adam’s] disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s [the second Adam’s] obedience the many will be made righteous.”* While *“sin reign[s] in death, grace ... reign[s] through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Rom. 5:18–21).

That does not mean, of course, that “[t]his world’s prince” will stop scowling fierce. He seeks our harm, and he will use every weapon he has against us. He will try to take “our life, Goods, fame, child, and wife.” Let us not despair, but look still to “the valiant One” who has won the victory and “holds the field,” by whose victory “Our vict’ry has been won.” “The Kingdom ours remaineth” (LSB656:2, 4).

Which brings me to the last little bit of Mark’s temptation account. Only his account has the curious statement about Jesus being *“with the wild animals.”* What is this, but perhaps a foretaste of that kingdom yet to come, but that comes in Jesus. Isaiah records the Lord’s proclamation fulfilled here in Jesus: *“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise”* (Isaiah 43:19–21).

Belted by righteousness and faithfulness, Christ delivers us into His kingdom, and we too can look forward to the *“wolf [dwelling] with the lamb, ... the leopard [lying down] with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together”* (Isaiah 11:5-6). This kingdom is ours as we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, our Savior.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.