

In the name of ✠ Jesus. Amen.

Those who are well versed on the Church year know that each year the First Sunday in Lent is devoted to the Temptation of Jesus. Immediately after Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River, Jesus goes out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

So you may have been expecting a recitation of Jesus' words, "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*" Or "*You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.*" Or again, "*You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.*"

And, if so, you were disappointed. The Gospel of Mark doesn't include any of that. Indeed, Mark's gospel has only two sentences—four clauses— that talk about Jesus' temptation. Therefore, Mark's Gospel not only omits this verbal sparring of Jesus with the devil, he also leaves out other details that we've come to expect when talking about the temptation of Jesus, and indeed about the season of Lent—fasting, for example. Mark makes no mention that Jesus had fasted during these 40 days.

On the other hand, Mark supplies some interesting details that make this short account quite interesting to study. For example, Mark calls the one tempting Jesus by one of his names, Satan, while Matthew and Luke tell us that Jesus is tempted by the devil. The latter use the designation, the devil, or slanderer, deceiver, along with some example temptations to show how the devil works. It's how he worked with Eve in the garden—remember Jesus said he is a liar and the father of lies. It's how he still works today, twisting in our minds and ears the very word of God and causing us to question that word, or perhaps to trust our own fallen reason more than that word. Mark, on the other hand calls the tempter, Satan, or adversary, to remind us that our adversary, who "*prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour,*" has become Jesus' adversary in the incarnation, for Jesus came as the woman's offspring, sent to crush the serpent's head.

And it wasn't as if this temptation was the first time that Satan sought to destroy Jesus—shortly after His birth, Satan set Herod upon the child to have him killed along with the other Bethlehem boys. But God intervened then and warned the Holy family to flee to Egypt where Jesus was kept safe until He could return to Nazareth, and grow up and prepare Himself to be about the Father's business that begins earnestly with His baptism and temptation.

Another interesting detail in Mark's accounting of this striving with Satan is that immediately after Jesus was baptized, Jesus didn't just go out into the wilderness; "*The Spirit ...drove him out into the wilderness.*" What a vivid picture

Mark paints of this encounter with Satan. Jesus is driven out, or more literally, cast out, tossed out into the wilderness to do battle with His adversary.

We shouldn't understand this as meaning that Jesus was reluctant to go out there and meet his archenemy. Jesus wasn't frightened. Jesus was not forced, kicking and screaming, out into the desert. He wanted to go, like Gimli the dwarf outside of Helm's Deep in *The Lord of the Rings* movie. He says to Aragorn, "*Oh come on, we can take 'em,*" but knowing he couldn't make the jump, he says, "*Toss me.*" And so Aragorn tosses Gimli into the fray. So Jesus, having just been anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, and "*full of the Holy Spirit,*" knows He can take 'em, and so is tossed by the Spirit out into the wilderness to do battle against His adversary.

Another detail that Mark supplies—Jesus is cast out into the wilderness not just for a little three-temptation skirmish with the devil. That's the way we often think of it as the other Gospels highlight those three representative temptations. But Mark says, Jesus was being attacked throughout those 40 days in a relentless, but futile attempt to get Jesus to succumb to these temptations.

For, no doubt, Satan thought he was ready to do battle with Jesus, and thought he could take Him. After all, he had strove with the first Adam in the garden and had won. He had destroyed the first Adam's holiness and righteousness. He had corrupted mankind's perfect knowledge of the Creator. He had stolen away the Divine image. He had conceived in the first Adam a desire to be like God, a desire that gave birth to sin, a sin that led to death—and not just for the first Adam, but for all mankind. Satan had done it once, he thought. He would just do it again with this second Adam.

But not so fast, Satan, for although Jesus was the second Adam, He would not be so easy to defeat. Unlike the first Adam, Jesus, the second Adam, was not made in the image and likeness of God. Jesus was the eternally-begotten Son of God, the very Image of God by whom all things were made—"*equal to the Father with respect to His divinity, [yet] less than the Father with respect to His humanity.*" God in the person of His Son assumed humanity into Himself, taking on our flesh. And His purpose was "*to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven.*" The second Adam was sent to restore what the first Adam had lost.

But if Jesus was to be the one to redeem Adam's seed, it was necessary that He must tread the road that Adam trod—being cast out of Paradise and into the wilderness. Yes in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word used for Adam and Eve's banishment from Paradise is the same as is used here of Jesus—cast out. So, just as the first Adam was cast out of Paradise because of his falling

prey to Satan's temptations—so also here at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus is cast out by the Spirit into the wilderness to be assailed by Satan. Yet with a difference—Jesus would not succumb. Jesus would not sin.

For had the second Adam fallen prey here to mankind's adversary, the rest of the path He came to tread would have been for naught. But He did not. Jesus strove with Satan and He won. He was tempted throughout those 40 days and He did not sin; He was tempted in every way as we are and remained without sin; He was tempted all the way to cross and death, yet He remained that perfect sacrificial lamb without spot or blemish.

But more than that—the second Adam, beginning His journey on the same road as the first Adam, also had to travel the unavoidable road that all of Adam's descendants must trudge—the road to death. Jesus traveled this road, not because He Himself couldn't avoid it, but rather because it was the Father's will to drive out the prince of this world, and Jesus' will too—because the Father was driven, and Jesus was too, to ensure that we might be redeemed, forgiven, reconciled, restored.

Yes, Jesus was resolute in this, with His face set toward Jerusalem, driven by His love for those whose flesh He took unto Himself. And so, though at last driven by rod and whip, driven by cruel soldiers to Mount Calvary, we know that they could not have done it unless it had been granted from above, had not the Father's own will permitted it, had not the Son's own will driven Him to make peace for us by the blood of his cross. Of His own accord was Jesus' sacred head wounded, with sore abuse and scorn. Driven by His own will to lay down His life for Adam and Adam's descendants was Jesus lifted up on a cross.

And that's where everything changed for Satan and for us. The road that the second Adam trod would lead to His death, but unlike the first Adam and all who are born in Adam's image, the second Adam's body did not decay. It did not return to dust. Although the Son of Man took on our dusty flesh and would die, no corruption would assail His flesh. Maggots and worms would not use His body as food as it lay in the tomb for three days. And after three days, His flesh would live again.

Dear saints of God, this is now the road we are on. Oh, yes, as we heard on Wednesday, we are mortal; we will die and return to dust. But because of Jesus, the second Adam, the free gift of His righteousness is applied to mortal sinners like us, and life reigns in us again through the second Adam. Indeed, whoever lives and believes in Jesus never truly dies. Paradise once closed because of the first Adam's disobedience is now opened again because of the second Adam's obedience.

Placed on this path by Holy Baptism, we follow in His way in faith to resurrection and life.

One final difference that Mark tells us—Jesus was cast out into the wilderness also among the wild animals. Talking with Justin about this text yesterday, he pointed out that even after His baptism Jesus was beset not only with the dangers of Satan’s temptations, but also the wild beasts. And it’s what we should expect, too. Our baptisms are not escapes from the wiles of Satan, the temptations of this world, the dangers that lurk in the darkness for us. Rather, as Luther reminds us, our baptisms burden us with “*a mighty and lifelong enemy.*” Truly, “[*we*] *walk in danger all the way ... Satan, who has marked his prey, Is plotting to deceive [us].*” “[*We*] *pass through trials all the way, With sin and ills contending.*” “*Death pursues [us] all the way ... He comes by night, he comes by day, He takes his prey most surely.*” And yet, made His children by baptism and faith, “[*We*] *walk with Jesus all the way, His guidance never fails [us]; Within His wounds [we] find a stay When Satan’s pow’r assails [us]; And by His footsteps led, [Our] paths [we] safely tread. No evil leads [our] souls astray; [We] walk with Jesus all the way.*”
LSB716

Indeed, “*let us ever walk with Jesus.*” LSB685

In the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.