

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Fourth Sunday After Epiphany, January 29, 2023**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 342 (139:4) 144, 347, 358

Lessons: Genesis 22:1-14; Hebrews 4:15-16; Matthew 16:21-26

Text: Matthew 4:1-11.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Dear friends in Christ Jesus,

A great number of holy angels were created during the six days of creation. They are included when the Bible says, ***“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good,” Genesis 1:31.*** God created everything perfect. There was no sin in the beginning. But there were also a number of angels ***“who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home – these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day,” Jude, v. 6.*** That was the beginning of sin. Peter writes that God ***“did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment,” 2 Peter 2:4.*** The devil is the chief of the evil angels. The Bible calls the devil, ***“the great dragon, ... that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray,” Revelation 12:9.***

We first read of the devil after Adam and Eve had been created and they were told to take care of the Garden of Eden. ***“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, “You must not eat from any tree in the garden”?’” Genesis 3:1.*** When Eve answered Satan and said they could not eat of the tree in the middle of the garden or touch it for then they would die. Satan said, ***“You will not surely die.” Genesis 3:4.*** Eve was deceived and listened to the devil, and both Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s commandment and ate of the forbidden fruit, and so fell into sin. Through Adam the whole world has become sinful. Paul writes, ***“Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned,” Romans 5:12.***

Now everyone must confess with David, ***“Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me,” Psalm 51:5.*** Our sinful nature manifests itself in all kinds of sins and evil lusts. Jesus says, ***“Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander,” Matthew 15:19.*** As long as we are in this world Satan will tempt us to fall away from Christ as our Savior. Peter writes, ***“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour,” 1 Peter 5:8.***

It is of great importance to us, then, to learn that when Christ was tempted by the devil, he won the victory over Satan. This victory was the prelude to that great and final victory that Jesus won on the cross for all of us sinners. Let us prayerfully consider:

**CHRIST’S VICTORY OVER SATAN AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS MINISTRY.**

- 1. Why Jesus was tempted by Satan;**
- 2. How He was tempted by Satan;**
- 3. How he won the victory over Satan; and,**
- 4. What his temptation and victory mean for us.**

***“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.”*** This temptation took place right after John baptized Jesus at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. It did not happen by chance, nor did Jesus

decide to test his power against Satan's power. It was the Father's will that this mighty battle between Satan and his Son should now be fought. Therefore, our text says that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted. In the state of humiliation Jesus had the Holy Spirit given to him. It was foretold by Isaiah concerning the Messiah, ***"The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD – And he will delight in the fear of the LORD,"*** Isaiah 11:2-3. Equipped with the full power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was now ready to do battle with Satan. In the book of Genesis, this battle between Jesus and Satan was foretold when God told Satan, ***"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel,"*** Genesis 3:15. In this battle, Jesus would win the victory over Satan, crushing his head, and Satan would cause Jesus to suffer and die on the cross, in this sense striking his heel. Satan knew that Jesus was sent to redeem mankind from sin, death and his power. Therefore he tempted Jesus not to go through with the work of redemption. This was the purpose of the temptation in the desert. Satan did not want sinful mankind to be redeemed.

Our text now describes **how Jesus was tempted by Satan.**

## 2.

The first thing we note is that Satan, cunning and sly as he is, attacked Jesus in a time of bodily weakness. ***"After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.'"*** Satan tempted Jesus during all the forty days and forty nights in the desert. ***"For forty days he was tempted by the devil,"*** Luke 4:2. Satan tempted Jesus when he had not eaten for forty days and forty nights and was very weak for lack of nourishment.

In two of the three temptations Satan addressed Jesus with the words, ***"If you are the Son of God."*** Jesus was tempted to doubt that he was the true Son of God. If Satan could make Jesus doubt that he was the one and only Son of God sent to this earth to redeem sinners, then he would win the victory over Christ, and the battle would be over. We should note that Satan tempts people today to make them doubt that Jesus is the Son of God. In the religion of Islam the Muslims teach that God has no son, that Jesus is merely a prophet, not the divine Son of God. If that is what any people believe, they have no Savior and no hope of salvation. But the Bible teaches, ***"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved,"*** Acts 4:12.

Satan further tempted Christ to be disobedient to his heavenly Father. If Jesus had performed a miracle to make bread to eat out of stones, he would have disobeyed his heavenly Father. This is what Satan wanted to happen.

In another of the temptations Jesus was told to do something evil to himself. ***"Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"*** Satan wanted Jesus to do something foolish and quoted Scripture to promise Jesus protection. But Psalm 91:11-12 does not teach that God will send his angels to protect us when we attempt a foolish stunt.

In the third temptation Jesus was tempted by Satan to bow down and worship him. In return for this Jesus would have great glory. ***"The devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 'All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.'"*** But all the kingdoms of the world and their glory do not belong to Satan to give to anyone. Jesus was tempted not to go through with his suffering and death for man's redemption by worshiping Satan and receiving glory and power. But Jesus already had all power and glory as God's Son. If Jesus had rebelled against his heavenly Father he would have become a slave of Satan.

Next we want to learn **how Jesus won the victory over Satan.**

3.

Jesus won the victory over Satan by overcoming all the temptations with the power of God's Word. Each time Jesus was tempted he told Satan, "***It is written***" and then quoted the appropriate Bible passage. When tempted to turn stones into bread to eat, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, "***Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.***" When tempted to jump off the pinnacle of the temple, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:16, "***Do not put the Lord your God to the test.***" When tempted to bow down and worship Satan for all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:13 and said to Satan, "***Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'***" In other words, Jesus told Satan to leave him and that he would not listen to him. And our text tells us, "***Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.***" With the chief of the evil angels gone, the holy angels came to serve Jesus and supply all his needs.

Finally, we want to learn **what Jesus' temptation and victory mean for us.**

4.

It means first of all that we can take comfort in this that Jesus is our compassionate High Priest. He can pity us in times of weakness and temptation. We read in the Bible, "***We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin,***" ***Hebrews 4:15.*** This is great comfort when we are tempted and feel weak and vulnerable to Satan's temptations.

We also can learn this important truth: The Word of God is a powerful weapon that we can use against the assaults of Satan. But then of course, we have to know how to use the Word of God. That means we have to read and study it so that it can be a good weapon for us against Satan. We are exhorted to arm ourselves as Christians against the temptations of Satan in these words, "***Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes,***" ***Ephesians 6:17.*** If in time of temptation we use the Word of God as Jesus did, we will find it a most effective weapon against the devil. What a powerful incentive to use God's Word more diligently so that Satan will not deceive us and cause us to disobey God. James has a word for us, "***Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you,***" ***James 4:7.***

Above all, we should diligently learn what Jesus did for us in his work of redemption. He, after all, is our Savior and our only hope of salvation. By the grace of God we have full forgiveness in him and the sure hope of eternal life. The grace of God, Paul writes, "***teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope –the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good,***" ***Titus 2:12-14.*** May the Holy Spirit move us to say,

"I walk with Jesus all the way,  
His guidance never fails me;  
Within His wounds I find a stay  
When Satan's power assails me;  
And by His footsteps led,  
My path I safely tread.  
In spite of ills that threaten may,  
I walk with Jesus all the way." Amen.  
(The Lutheran Hymnal: 413:5)

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