

*The First Sunday in Lent* - February 14, 2016  
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

Luke 4:1-13

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'" The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours." 8 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. (NIV)*

Have you seen the latest *Star Wars - the Force Awakens* movie yet? Over Christmas break we took some time to educate our children on the original series. It is remarkable how many people just love a classic war between good and evil. On one side you have the forces of evil, the dark side, and on the other those on the side of justice and good - "*may the force be with you.*" The outcome often looks to be in doubt as the good side is sometimes pushed back, even defeated, until usually by the slimmest of margins those on the side of all that is good and right come out on top.

Today, my friends, we witness a battle between good and evil. However, this is no science fiction movie; this battle is very real. This fight is not just entertaining; this war actually determines our eternity. The enemy is Satan or the devil. On the good side is God, God who humbled Himself and became a man. As we watch the devil's futile attempts to stop Jesus from carrying out God's plan of salvation, I pray that we: **Learn from Jesus' Victory Over Satan. To detect the devil's deceptions. To Wield the Weapon of the Word.**

This encounter takes place after Jesus' baptism. The battlefield is the wilderness. The devil tempts Jesus for 40 days and nights. Relentless, the devil continually tests Jesus trying to cause Him to sin. The devil knew if he could get Jesus to sin just once, he would win the victory. During these 40 days, Jesus did not have anything to eat and he is hungry. While we are not given any specific information about these temptations in the first forty days, we are now given three particular temptations.

In these temptations, we see the father of lies, the devil, in action. We observe the cleverness and craftiness of Satan. The devil overcame the first man, Adam, with food, and so he tries again to cause the fall of the second Adam, Christ, with a similar temptation. The devil says to Jesus, "*If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.*" Do you detect the deception of the devil? Two things the devil says Jesus can accomplish by doing this. One he can show off His power. "*Show me that you are the powerful Son of God.*" Secondly, Jesus could satisfy His hunger. The devil wants Jesus to sin by showing a lack of

trust in His heavenly Father to provide for Him. He wants Jesus to sin by having just an ounce of sinful pride that wants to show the devil who He really is by serving Himself.

What can we learn about the devil's tricks in this first temptation? He is ready to jump all over a weakness. Jesus is hungry and the devil knew it. In the same way, don't you think devil will come after us when we are down, tired, or sick? Will he not also attack when we are weak? The devil does not want us to trust God and His care for us. He will play on our pride trying to get us to take things into our own hands.

The devil also takes Jesus to a high place (Matthew writes a very high mountain) and shows Jesus, in an instant, all the kingdoms of the world. Then, he says, ***"I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to."*** Doesn't this want to make you scream out, "liar, liar?" Indeed, the devil is the father of lies. Just as he offered Adam and Eve what he did not have the power to give, so now he lies to Jesus offering something only God had the authority to give. But Satan knows what Jesus came to do. He came to redeem the world and the price to do it would be tremendous - terrible suffering and a horrendous death. So the devil tries to make it easy for Jesus. ***"Just quickly bow to me. No one else is even aware of it. Then all will be yours and you can avoid the terrible road to the cross that is waiting for you."*** Yet, in reality Satan knew this short cut would be a dead end, not only for Jesus, but for the world.

Do you detect Satan's deception here? He has no problem with flat out lies. But so often we fall for his lies! He tells us life will be better if we disobey God's commands. He tells a frustrated wife there is no way she can be happy staying in her current marriage. He tells a young business man he will never get to the top by being honest. He tells young people there is no way they can keep themselves pure from sexual sins. He makes people think that much wealth equals much happiness. He tells us a little lie or gossip never hurt anyone. He promises an easy road. He offers countless things that are not his to give. He lies and lies and lies. The devil will do anything to turn our attention and worship away from the true God.

Yes the devil will try anything - even using God's Word to attack and deceive. Satan takes Jesus up to the highest point of the temple. The historian Josephus tells us that the drop there was some 450 feet. Here the devil, approaches Jesus and says, ***"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here. For it is written, He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully."*** Satan tries fighting fire with fire so to speak. He quotes the Scriptures. These words seem to fit the situation. Satan asks Jesus to test God's saving power. Earlier Satan tried to get Jesus to distrust the Father, now the devil is trying to get Jesus to prove that He trusts God. But this would be a false trust. The devil left out the words, ***"he will guard you in all your ways."*** God's beautiful promise in Psalm 91 is an assurance of the Lord's protection as we go about our lives day to day. But God doesn't promise we will never have trouble or be hurt especially when we bring it onto ourselves.

Do you detect the devil using this same kind of deception today? He uses God's Word but he adds, subtracts, twists and turns God's Words in all directions. He pulls things out of context. He misuses and misapplies God's Word in order to create doubt in God's promises. Certainly, we see the devil's cunning. But Jesus exposes Satan for who is - the father of lies.

While I pray we detect such deceptions, I also pray we see how our Savior won the victory for us. As true God, Jesus had the power to simply tell the devil to get lost. Jesus

could have sent him reeling with almighty power. Instead, the God-man set aside His full use of power as God. This battle is not a sham. Jesus allowed Himself to be put under attack as our substitute. Jesus is fully human and, as we read in our second lesson today, Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are tempted. So how did Jesus defeat the devil? Did you notice? Jesus uses the same weapon God has given to us, His Holy Word.

So when Satan tried to get Jesus to prove Himself and make Himself a meal by a miracle, Jesus simply answered by quoting a verse from Deuteronomy, ***“It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, (Matthew adds) but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”*** Jesus’ trust in God remained firm. It is more important to trust in His Word than to fulfill a physical hunger. Jesus didn’t come to use His power to serve himself, but came to serve others and do the will of His Father.

Neither is Jesus about to fall for Satan’s lie and bow before him. Jesus is determined and willing to carry the sins of the world to His suffering and death. He quotes the Scripture again from Deuteronomy with a verse that is fitting for us to use against any of the devils attacks. Jesus answered, ***“It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”*** And when Satan attempts to turn the weapon of the Word against Jesus, Jesus is not fooled. He, with one simple sentence from Deuteronomy, lets Scripture interpret Scripture. Jesus answered, ***“It says: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”*** Jesus trusted God’s promises, but he would trust in promises God hasn’t given in His Word. Satan is no match for Jesus and His Word. ***“When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.”***

Jesus wielded the weapon of the Word and the devil left defeated. Why is Jesus able to use the weapon of the Word so effectively? Yes, I know that Jesus is true God who knows all, but look at His example here on earth. How often don’t you find Jesus listening to God’s Word and spending time in prayer! Just a couple weeks ago we saw that it was Jesus’ custom to go every week to the synagogue for worship. Jesus, as true man, never neglected the one thing needful. He never was too busy to hear and study the Word of God. Jesus knew this Word is the most powerful weapon against evil. I pray we learn from Jesus. What is our excuse for not spending more time in the Word? If we think we have busy schedules, I think we need to open the Gospels and look at how busy Jesus was during His three year public ministry! Yet, He knew how important it was to take time for the Word. Is it worth spending two hours here on Sunday morning? Is it worth coming on Wednesdays now too? Is it worth having family devotions and Bible study during the week? Watch Jesus wield the weapon of God’s Word and see just how worth it is to put on the full armor of God!

I said my prayer today is that we learn from Jesus’ victory over Satan two things – to detect the devil’s deceptions and to wield the weapon of God’s Word. But more than that I pray you see something else today in this epic battle of good versus evil. I pray you see your Champion, your true life Hero, your Savior! Unlike the normal battle between good and evil, this one is no contest. Jesus not only wins the war, but He doesn’t lose a single battle. Jesus comes to defeat the devil and win a victory for all of mankind by his perfect life and innocent suffering and death. He bleeds and dies so that our daily defeats are forgiven. After crushing the devil with His death on the cross our Savior lives to teach us how to wield the weapon of His Word and send Satan fleeing. That’s much better than any force being with us! Amen.

