

To the pilgrims of a heavenly pilgrimage, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

PRAY: Heavenly Father, as we do not live by bread alone, so feed us with manna which you supply from heaven. Amen.

***Luke 4:1–13 (NKJV)** — 1 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. 3 And the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” 4 But Jesus answered him, saying, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’ ” 5 Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. 7 Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.” 8 And Jesus answered and said to him, “Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’ ” 9 Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. 10 For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,’ 11 and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’ ” 12 And Jesus answered and said to him, “It has been said, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’ ” 13 Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.*

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

PRAY: Lord, sustain us with Your Word alone. Amen.

Man Sustained in the Wilderness by Word and Faith

1. Not by earthly food, but by heavenly manna
2. Not by earthly comfort, but by heavenly glory
3. Not by earthly proof of God’s presence, but by heavenly promises

In the name of the Lamb who was slain and has begun His reign, dear fellow beneficiaries of our Lord’s suffering and death,

Sounds like a national headline: Man eats nothing for 40 days, turns opportunities for food, shelter, even the aid of angels, and survives, trusting only in a book to sustain Him.

That number “40” draws our attention to another wilderness journey that Scripture has recorded. For 40 years the Children of Israel wandered in the wilderness. Like Jesus

they were tested – hunger; the desire for earthly comfort; the need to prove God is gracious. All three of Jesus' quotes of Scripture in fact are drawn from these events in the life of Israel.

The wilderness motif of Scripture also brings to mind our own temptations in this world. Just like Israel, we are face a pilgrimage through a wilderness filled with temptations from the devil. Earthly needs, earthly comfort, and earthly proof that God is with us are real tests that we face.

Man Sustained in the Wilderness by Word and Faith. What makes this headline stand out above all others is that Jesus did what no man has ever done before. He faced the wilderness alone and resisted the devil purely by the Word and faith. By this perfect work, He sustains us too.

1. Not by earthly food, but by heavenly manna

So shortly after God's powerful display of deliverance from Egypt, Israel complains. In the second month into their wilderness journey, we read: *And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."* (Exodus 16:3)

Their hunger reveals a need for more than just for bread. They were spiritually lean. As Psalm 78 reveals: *But they sinned even more against Him By rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness. And they tested God in their heart By asking for the food of their fancy. Yes, they spoke against God: They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? ... Therefore the Lord heard this and was furious; So a fire was kindled against Jacob, And anger also came up against Israel, Because they did not believe in God, And did not trust in His salvation.* (Psalm 78:17–22)

They fell because they did not trust His Word and promise of deliverance.

How often when we are confronted with earthly needs, do we forget the promises of God? When our finances are tight, we become anxious about the future. When the government makes choices that we don't agree with or the economy takes a turn for the worse, we worry about what is in store for our children. When some of the luxuries we once enjoyed are taken away, we complain. Left to these sins we too fall in the wilderness.

Therefore the Spirit drives God's Son to face these tests for us. Directly on the heels of His baptism, Jesus is chosen by God to face the devil.

3 And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

It was not that Jesus was short on resources. He has the divine power and world-wide hinger, let alone feed himself with a little bread. The question Satan poses is designed to get Jesus to doubt that He is truly the Son of God – or to think He needs to prove it.

Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8. From there we read, *And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. (Deuteronomy 8:2–3)*

Where Israel and we have fallen, Jesus stood. In order to fulfill righteousness in our place, Jesus could not use His divine powers to serve Himself. He would be sustained on the Word alone. So Jesus says to His disciples in John 4, *“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. (John 4:34)*

So what do you hunger for? Relief from stress? A little financial cushion? To hang on to those luxuries you need to sacrifice to survive this wilderness? Perhaps God is testing you. Perhaps the devil is tempting you.

What will sustain you is not earthly bread. It is the Bread of Life. Survive by the fact that Jesus has overcome the devil and has delivered you from your sins. No evil thought or seed of doubt he can whisper in your ear can change this.

I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” (John 6:48–51)

Think of the worship service as an escape from the wilderness of this world. Here the Word sustains you by announcing the forgiveness of your sins and giving you something eternal. The Lord’s Supper today is truly a meal for your soul. This wine is the heavenly presence of the blood of Christ. Here God pours out forgiveness to you. This bread is heavenly presence of the body of Christ. Here you are joined to the body that was given into sin for you. Here we are joined to each other, to bear one another’s needs as members of Christ. No one goes hungry in the fellowship of the Church – not physically, not spiritually.

As we journey through this wilderness, let us not be lured back to Egypt by earthly bread. We survive not on bread alone. Know and trust the Word by heart. It is a heavenly defense against the devil. What a headline! Man Sustained in the Wilderness by Word and Faith.

2. Not by earthly comfort, but by heavenly glory

One of the reoccurring themes in Israel's complaints to Moses was, "we wish we were back in Egypt." Really? Do you remember what things were like in Egypt?

We are happy so long as we are comfortable – at least a little more comfortable. Resisting temptation does not afford this comfort. It makes us uncomfortable.

The second temptation posed to Jesus was to offer Him all the comfort the world could offer. Even more so, it was an offer to choose the appealing that would avoid the cross.

6 And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish."

Jesus could here receive kingship without having to go through the agony of the cross. After all, this was exactly the type of king the people wanted – one who could give them earthly comfort and protection. Surely Jesus would use this for good. He could eradicate poverty, end hunger, unite us all under one earthly rule.

The devil is ready to give to you – all the riches, all the power, all the pleasure that this world could offer. We could easily avoid suffering and persecution. Only one condition. You must bow down to him. Without Christ this would be our end – unceasingly stuck in this wilderness forever.

Before Israel would know the glory of the promised land, they would experience suffering. This is the path to glory.

Jesus responds from Deuteronomy 6 – 8 ***"Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"***

God had anointed Jesus not for earthly glory, but for humiliation and death. God's kingdom is not of this world. His kingdom rules in the midst of suffering.

The 1st commandment is fulfilled by faith. Jesus serves and worships God perfectly by trusting Him above all things. Jesus trusted that God would preserve Him even through death, to raise Him up and give Him a name above every name. As true Man, He relied on the Word alone.

Think of yourself as a pilgrim, a nomad trudging through this world. Journey on dear Christians, uncomfortably. Trust in God's heavenly glory which is yours by faith. This is our spiritual service to the LORD who redeemed us. For He will who crowns us with the glory of our heavenly promised land. Again we read that miraculous headline: Man Sustained in the Wilderness by Word and Faith.

3. Not by earthly proof of God's presence, but by heavenly promises

So soon after God responds to the Israelites complaints for food, they again are found complaining again. Short on water, they accuse Moses of bringing them out into the wilderness to die of thirst.

God does answer their cry. However He is not pleased. He calls the place “Meribah” which means “contention.” As it says in Exodus 17, “... because they tempted the LORD saying, ‘Is the LORD among us or not?’ ”

The devil tries to get Jesus to fall into the same contention with the LORD. Is God with Him or not? Where’s the proof?

9 Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. 10 For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,’ 11 and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’ ”

If you are the Son of God, prove it. Prove that God is among us. As Jesus stands atop the Temple, it is likely that there are hundreds of Jews standing below. Prove that You are the Chosen One, then they will that God is among them and believe.

How often doesn’t Satan ask you to prove God exists? How often does He whisper in your ear that God just isn’t giving enough evidence? More is needed. A sign perhaps.

When you have conversations with those who don’t believe in God, do you find these kind of questions coming up? “Meribah” – Prove it. Our rational mind wants a logical proof that will show the world that Jesus is the Christ and that our God is the only true God.

And do you also find that when having discussions with unbelievers or skeptics, they often seem to know more about the Bible than you do? Do they quote Scripture to prove contradictions in your faith? I have had these discussions. The antagonist will throw out things like – how did Noah get all those animals on the ark ... why does God say “an eye for an eye” in the OT, but Jesus says to love your enemies in the NT?

When they start throwing out a few passages, we get scared. What if they are right?

Although there are logical responses that refute these arguments, that is not the main point.

Jesus could have easily refuted the devil’s argument. He could have pointed out that, when quoting Psalm 91, he left off a portion of the passage which says: “He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways.” He could have pointed out that Psalm 91 emphasizes the spiritual care we receive by the way of faith, not sight. But He does not.

12 And Jesus answered and said to him, "It has been said, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.' "

Jesus reveals that this twisted question is really just "Meribah" – contending with God for for earthly proof of His love.

When we start asking for earthly proof, we need to be rebuked. Doubts, rationalizations, lack of understanding of Scripture leaves us all thirsty. And left to our sinful mind, we will only contend with the LORD. We so desperately need to drink of the spiritual Rock that pours forth from God's mouth.

The Word is what will answer your questions, correct your doubts, rebuke our unbelief, and reveal God's love. Invite the skeptic to church to see with his ears that God is indeed among us. For only hearing the powerful message of the gospel will lead us to understand that we don't need to prove it, we simply believe the Word.

From our earlier Scripture reading: *"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:8b,9).* Our evidence of God's presence is heavenly, not earthly. God is among us, near us, in the word of faith which we preach. He delivers there the resurrection of Christ as our sure defense. Against doubt, against our contentions, against sin, the resurrection proves God's presence. His love is known not by Jesus throwing Himself from the Temple in Jerusalem, but by Jesus lifting Himself on the cross in Jerusalem. Thus as the devil left Jesus, so, as James writes, "resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

During Israel's 40 years in the wilderness bread and water were not God's means of sustaining them and granting them rest in Canaan. It was the promise. It was the word that kept them under God's care and grace. As pilgrims, this world will never be our home. It will always be a wilderness, a place we long to leave. We overcome the temptations of the devil by looking to the faithful work of Jesus. Faith in the Word delivers us to our permanent dwelling place, the promised land of heaven.

PRAY: Lord keep us under the shadow of Your wing. Through Your Word sustain and deliver us from every evil work of the devil.

What a headline: Man sustained in the wilderness by Word and Faith. Amen.