

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. <sup>3</sup> Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." <sup>4</sup> But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" <sup>5</sup> Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup> and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'" <sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup> And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" <sup>11</sup> Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Text: Matthew 4:1-11 A 2/27/22 Genesis 3:1-21 Hebrews 4:14-16 Ps. 1 Resp. Ps.: 17  
Hymns: 540, 341, 103 (3-6), 262

## **JESUS GIVES US THE VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION**

Dear fellow believers in Christ, in whom we have the victory over Satan and sin,

The devil is constantly trying to tempt us to sin. He knows our weaknesses, and he knows when we are weakest. Sometimes the devil tempts us severely, and keeps working on us, making it very hard to resist him. The good news from God's Word this morning is that **JESUS GIVES US THE VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION.**

During His earthly ministry, Jesus would almost always refer to Himself as "*the Son of Man*," pointing out that He is also human. In our text we're told, "*when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward [Jesus] was hungry.*" As true man, Jesus would get hungry and have to eat, just as we do. The Bible says Jesus is true man. Long before He was born it was prophesied, "*Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel*" (Is. 7:14). The first chapter of Luke informs us that God's Son was conceived and born of the virgin, Mary, and so also became human. We confess in the Nicene Creed, "I believe in ... one Lord Jesus Christ ... who ... was made man."

We see from our text that Jesus is also true God. Only as God could Jesus resist every one of Satan's temptations and remain sinless. The book of Hebrews says that Jesus is "*holy, [innocent], undefiled, separate from sinners*" (7:26). The Bible prophesied about Jesus, "*Unto us a child is born .... And His name will be called ... mighty God*" (Is. 9:6). The angel Gabriel explained to Mary how she could be the mother of God's Son: "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God*" (Lk. 1:35). We also confess in the Nicene Creed, "I believe ... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God."

Jesus Christ is true man and true God. As true man while He was on earth, Jesus could be tempted. As true God, Jesus is perfect and cannot sin. Satan's temptations were real temptations for Jesus as true man while He was on earth. As true God, Jesus was able to perfectly resist all of Satan's temptations and never sin.

The Son of God has always been stronger than Satan. Scripture assures us, "[Christ] who is in you is greater than [Satan] who is in the world" (1 Jn. 4:4b). Although Satan certainly tried, never once during Jesus' earthly life was Satan able to lead Him into sin. Jesus cast Satan's demons out of people all the time, and the demons were never able to resist Jesus. All the way to the cross Satan couldn't stop Jesus. Peter tells us, "Christ ... [was] put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, by whom also He ... went and preached to the spirits in prison": in hell (1 Pet. 3:18-19). In The Apostles' Creed we confess that Jesus "descended into hell." This wasn't part of Jesus' suffering, because He had already said of all He had to do and suffer for us, "It is finished." Jesus' descent into hell was part of His victory! By descending into hell and coming out again Jesus showed that He had defeated Satan and death and hell. As the God-Man Jesus Christ rose again bodily from the grave, and lives forever.

We're told something very interesting: "Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (my emphasis). The Holy Spirit purposely led Jesus into the desert so that Satan could tempt Jesus, and Jesus willingly cooperated. Why? The Bible tells us, "in all things [Christ] had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation" ("atonement," "reconciliation") "for the sins of the people" (He. 2:17). Jesus allowed Himself to be tempted for our sakes, because you and I so often fail when we're tempted. If we had to earn our own way to heaven we would have to live, not just a good life, but a perfect life. Jesus lived the perfect life that we can never begin to live, and earned heaven for us. He took our sins on Himself and paid for them all with His suffering and death on the cross.

Jesus knows how hard it can be for us to resist temptation. Scripture says, "In that [Christ] Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted" (He. 2:18). As the God-Man on earth, Jesus also experienced temptation Himself. Jesus understands from personal experience what you go through and I go through when we're tempted. Jesus knows exactly what we need to be able to resist and overcome Satan's temptations.

With might of ours can naught be done, soon were our loss effected;  
But 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. (TLH 262:2).

Our text is from Mark's Gospel. In his parallel account Luke informs us that Jesus was "being tempted for forty days by the devil" (4:2). The three temptations mentioned in our text were only some of the temptations the devil threw at Jesus.

Jesus fasted during those forty days and, of course, became hungry. Satan tempted Him by saying, *“If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”* Satan dared Jesus to prove that He is the Son of God by turning stones into bread. Jesus didn’t have to perform a miracle to prove to the devil that He is God. He told Satan, *“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”* Jesus would continue to follow His Father and wait on His Father to provide Him food.

Satan took Jesus to the top of the temple in Jerusalem and told Him, *“If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written, ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.’”* Satan knows Scripture. Jesus quoted Scripture to him, so Satan quoted Scripture to Jesus. Satan tried to twist Scripture. He made it seem that since God promises to protect us, Jesus could jump off the top of a high building. Jesus resisted Satan’s temptation by telling him, *“It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God’”* (*“put the Lord your God to the test”*). Jesus used one passage of Scripture to explain another passage of Scripture. The angels protect us, but that doesn’t mean we can do something stupid and purposely put ourselves in danger.

Finally Satan took Jesus up on a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. He told Jesus, *“All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”* Scripture does call Satan *“the prince of this world”* (Jn. 14:30). Jesus says, *“He who is not with Me is against Me”* (Mt. 12:30); so all the unbelievers belong to Satan, and the unbelievers are definitely in the majority. Satan dared to tell Jesus that if He, God, would worship him, the devil, he would give Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. The temptation for Jesus was that He wouldn’t have to suffer and die on the cross as our heavenly King. All He would have to do is bow down before the devil, and the devil would give all of mankind to Him. Of course, Satan is a liar and never would have kept his word. Worse yet, where would we be if the Son of God had worshiped the devil?! Jesus told Satan, *“Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”* Jesus again resisted Satan’s temptation, and sent him away.

Jesus shows us how to resist temptation. Jesus had fasted, that is, He had eaten very little. Fasting is a religious custom that some Christians sometimes practice. While they fast, many take extra time to meditate on God’s Word and pray. The Bible tells us, *“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Pet. 5:8). *“Keep on watching and praying that you do not enter into temptation”* (Mt. 26:41). Prayer and holding on to God’s Word is how we overcome temptation.

Every time Satan tempted Him, Jesus turned to the Word of God. Each time Jesus applied a fitting passage which refuted Satan’s temptation. Jesus shows us that when Satan tempts us we need to open our Bibles and get God’s Word before our eyes. We, with the help of a fellow Christian or our pastor if we feel the need, should turn to passages that apply to whatever temptation we’re facing. Satan tries to twist the meaning of Bible

passages in our mind, and confuse us. When he does, we need to keep holding on to what God's Word says, and not let go. God's Word never changes. It's always up to date. God's Word clearly teaches us right from wrong. The devil cannot stand against the Word of God. God's Word removes our questions and doubts, and shows us the way.

Jesus teaches us to persevere. The Apostle Paul encourages us that when Satan tempts us we need to "*stand firm in the Lord and in the strength of His might*" (Eph. 6:10). Sometimes it seems when we're being tempted that we can't take it anymore. But Scripture assures us that "*God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted more than you are able to bear; but will with the temptation also make the way to escape, that you may be able to bear it*" (1 Cor. 10:13). "*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you*" (Jms. 4:7-8a). We're sinful. We live in a sinful world. The devil is going to tempt us. But as we turn to the Lord, He will never allow Satan's temptations to be more than we can bear. Satan tempted Jesus severely, but finally Jesus sent him away. Angels ministered to Jesus and strengthened Him. Satan is constantly tempting us. Sometimes he keeps after us and keeps after us and makes life miserable for us. But the Bible promises us, "*The God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast*" (1 Pet. 5:9-10).

In place of all of our failures to resist temptation, we have Christ's perfect life for our salvation. We have Christ's death on the cross that takes all of our sins away. Because He was tempted Jesus understands what each of us goes through when we're tempted, and He gives us just the help we need. Jesus teaches us to watch and pray when we're being tempted by the devil, and keep turning to the Bible. And Jesus enables us to persevere and resist temptation in the strength He gives us.

Oh then rejoice that thro' His Son, God is with sinners now at one;  
Made like yourselves of flesh and blood your brother is th'eternal God.

What harm can sin and death then do? The true God now abides with you.  
Let hell and Satan rage and chafe, Christ is your Brother – you are safe.

Not one He will or can forsake who Him his confidence doth make.  
Let all his wiles the Tempter try, you may his utmost powers defy.

You shall and must at last prevail; God's own you are, you cannot fail.  
To God forever sing your praise with joy and patience all your days. Amen.  
(TLH # 103:3-6)