

First Sunday of Lent

February 22, 2026

Matthew 4:1-11:

Do We Get It?

- I. The Tempter
- II. The Temptations
- III. Redemption

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
2155 N. Oakland Avenue
Decatur Illinois 62526

St, Matthew 4:1-11

Dear Friends in Christ,

John R.W. Stott, a British evangelical pastor, was on target with this insight: "Satan, when tempting someone, says that sin isn't very bad, isn't very big and isn't very important. But after that person has yielded to temptation and sinned, and has begun to think about asking God's forgiveness, then Satan reverses his field. And to his victim Satan declares that sin is so big, so bad, and so awful that asking for forgiveness will hardly suffice." Do we understand that we are on his agenda, every day? Satan is not omnipresent, but he has servants. Remember that Jesus referred to "...the devil and his angels (Mt.25:41b)."

This first Sunday of Lent we begin Our Journey to Calvary. Our first stop is The Temptation of Jesus. The question will be,

DO WE GET IT?

I. The Tempter

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (v.1)". Tempted by the *Tempter*. And so, begins Satan's attempt to defeat Jesus' mission which is to destroy Satan's mission to drag us into eternal hell.

There are certain Scriptures addressing Satan that we must have in front of us, each of us, starting with this word of God from the Apostle Peter: "Be sober minded; Be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world (I Pt.5:8-9)." Do we get it? Satan is seeking someone to devour. That's all he does. Seeking someone: you, every one of you – me – everyone holding on to Christ.

There's this Word of God from the Apostle Paul concerning those claiming to be of Christ but twisting the word to their benefit; you know, like the song and dance preachers on television, the Internet and in most churches today. This Word: "And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will respond to their deeds (2 Cor. 11:14,15)." *Satan disguises himself as an Angel of light*. He can look good and verbally persuasive.

And before we look at *The Temptation of Jesus*, we must have this Word of the Lord in front of us – in our day-to-day living. The Word that he spoke to the unbelieving leaders of the Jews who had immediate access to Scripture – just as we do. Jesus said...

Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies (Jn.8:43-45).

It has been said before, the only things Satan can do are lie and murder. Do we get it? Consequently, The Temptation...

II. The Temptations

And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (vv.1-4)."

Do you remember the conversation Satan had with Adam and Eve in the garden, how he persuaded Eve's thinking to disobey God and eat the forbidden fruit: "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil (Gn.3:4-5)?" Well, they didn't die...right away. It's always a half-truth with him, just enough to drag a person into hell. This was Satan's goal at the temptation of Jesus, to tempt Christ to fall into sin and fail as our Savior.

By the way, "If you are the Son of God" is a sarcastic way of saying, "Since you are the Son of God do what is necessary to take care of yourself." Satan knows who Jesus is, and Jesus knows that. What's important here is what Jesus said: "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (v.4)." You've got to know the Word for the battle.

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, he will command his angels concerning you, and "On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone (vv.5-6)."

In this second part of the temptation Satan twists Psalm 91:11-12 to persuade Jesus that He would be demonstrating a lack of trust if He did not test in His Father. Jesus destroys Satan's perverted attempt: Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test (v.7).'" Well, do we ever attempt to seek proof that He loves us instead of this Word: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."? Again, Satan fails to destroy Jesus' mission for us.

Of course, there is one area where we can test Him, as God said through Malachi: "Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour out down for you a blessing until there is no more need (Mal.3:10)." That's the test many prefer to avoid! And then comes the final part of the temptation:

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve (vv.9-10).'"

But Satan doesn't own the world. That he even puts this temptation in front of Jesus clearly speaks to his twisted thinking. Commentator Lenski wrote: "Satan would place himself in harmony with God by making Jesus the king... Satan does not bow before God in worship as Jesus is to bow before Satan (Lenski, St. Matthew's Gospel, p.155).

Satan was condemned to hell because he wanted to be God. As a murderer and liar, he wants all humanity to be with him. He is vile! His ultimate outcome will be, "... the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev.20:10)." An eternal reservation in "the lake of fire and sulfur." And the humanity that follows him, rejects the Lord? Jesus said: "The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of His Kingdom all causes of sin and all law breakers and throw them into the fiery furnace... (Mt.13:41-42a)." Welcome to the heat!

III. Redemption

The only way out is *Redemption*. And redemption is to be released or freed from blame and debt. It is the apostle John who wrote, "Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil (I Jn.3:8)." Without question, the sin is still in us. We battle with it daily. We fail daily. But to make a practice of sinning and say, "I know what I'm doing is wrong but I'm going to do it and enjoy it because God will forgive me,"...well, think again! God's Word states, "If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the lights, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin (I Jn. 1:6-7)."

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I know that I have repeated the following Scripture a multitude of times, and you might say, "Well he's old and old people repeat themselves." Right...but no apology. I can't help it because this Word is always there, always there in my heart and mind. You see, I still sin and I don't want to, but it's still there! I seriously pray you will find comfort and strength in this Word:

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing... So, I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind but with the flesh I serve the law of sin (Rm.7:19-25).

Dear friends, we have been redeemed – bought by the life of Jesus who would willingly suffer our temptations, our sins, our hell, die, and pay the debt we owe God for our sin, namely a sinless life. We are promised: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rm.8:1). I leave with you these words of Luther:

He sent his only Son into the world. He put all the sin of all the people on his Son and said, "You will be Peter, who denied me; Paul, who persecuted, blasphemed, and acted violently; David, who committed adultery; the Sinner who ate the apple in paradise; the thief on the cross. In summary, you will be the one who committed all the sins of all the people. Make sure you pay for these sins and make atonement (pay the debt they can't pay) for them.

Do we get it?

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott