

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us is found in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew the fourth chapter beginning at the first verse, and we read in Jesus' name:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. ³ Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." ⁴ 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.'" ⁵ Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ 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.'" ⁷ Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You

shall not tempt the LORD your God.'" ⁸ Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ 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.'" ¹¹ Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Heavenly Father these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray, Lord, that You would increase our faith through them. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

Today is our first Sunday of Lent, it is also known as "Invocavit" Sunday. The term Invocavit is a latin term which means, He shall call or He calls. It is brought down from the ancient church and thus has retained its name when the historic lectionary is followed. Over

the course of Lent we will have many weeks with names that are hard to pronounce, and yet they teach us a very important lesson.

In our Gospel text for this week, we see the temptation of Christ in the wilderness. Not only had Jesus fasted for 40 days, but now He was being tempted by satan. Jesus, weary, worn-out, and hungry and thirsty now had to endure the onslaughts of satan and all of His wiles. As a man, we can see the frailty of Jesus as He had to endure these attacks from satan, but as God we learn one very important thing: ***God overcomes temptation.***

When starting our season of Lent, the historic lectionary always began with the temptation of Jesus Christ. It is a story that you may know very well and it is a story that speaks to many of us here today.

Three times Jesus is approached by satan as satan tries to lure Jesus away and have Him cave to temptation. Though satan knows who Jesus is... you have to imagine that satan is trying to take advantage of the fact that, as

Matthew puts it, “He was hungry.” I can think of so many bad situations that start out that way or similar to it in God’s word. Think of Esau who sold his birthright because he just couldn’t go one more minute without food... Think about Adam and Eve, from our Old Testament lesson, who just had to eat from the one tree that God told them not to eat from... Think of Judas, who feasted on the yeast of the Pharisees, and so chose to betray Jesus for 30 silver pieces.

And so with Jesus hungry and tired and worn-out, satan approaches Him. And satan approaches Him almost in disbelief, but almost tempting Jesus to show His godly side, ‘If you are the Son of God...’ then You should do this. If you are the Son of God, then tell these rocks to become bread... because I know you’re hungry. If you are the Son of God, then throw yourself from up here and watch God protect you if that is His plan.

But notice the last time, satan neglects to mention who Jesus is... instead he is tempting Him and almost playing up to His human side.

If you bow down and worship me... I will give You all the kingdoms of the earth. Wow! Nice prize for just bowing the knee to someone. I wonder how many of us would take that deal?

I know, none of us, right? We would never bow the knee to satan, not even if he offered all the kingdoms of the world to us. And you're right... you wouldn't bow the knee for that, because satan offers you far less and bow the knee so readily.

While satan is not offering you the kingdoms of the world, he does offer you many things. How often do we bow the knee and follow satan by giving in to our lustful desires? How often do we bow the knee to satan and steal or lie? How often do we bow the knee to satan and replace our Savior, the God of our Salvation, with money, or toys, or things of this world? Satan does not offer us the world, because he doesn't need to. He offers us lies... and we readily accept them.

Just like Adam and Eve, we like the prospect of something promised by satan... but we never

fully realize it. In the garden of Eden, remember, that satan promised our first parents that they would be like God if they ate from the tree. Unfortunately they ate... and we are now nothing like God. Satan promises us wealth, friends, power... and we jump at it... and we end up with nothing. And unfortunately, we are not able to fight off satan alone. Though we may try to put up a good fight, without help we are no match for satan.

As our Apology says, "For human nature is enslaved and held captive by the devil, who deceives it with ungodly opinions and errors and incites it to all sorts of sins." And he does... and we do. By ourselves we are harmless to satan, and yet thanks be to God that He does not leave us alone.

For our salvation, God the Father sent His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, into this world. He sent Jesus to come and live a perfect life... a life without sin. Jesus came into this world and He was tempted in every way that we are, and in fact beyond ways that we are, and He never gave in to sin. He did not betray God when He

was hungry. He did not tempt God and jump from a high place. He did not dishonor God and worship satan. Jesus stood up to all temptations hurled at Him. And for His perfect life, for His following every one of God's laws perfectly... He was killed. He was killed by the very people He came to save. Jesus was killed, He was hung on a cross, to suffer for all of our sins, to suffer for all of our wrongs. Jesus bore the weight of all of our sins as He walked through His life and as he hung on the cross. Jesus did all of this and He did it for you. And three days later Jesus rose from the dead to proclaim that His life and death were payment enough for all sins of all men of all time.

And it is now through faith, that we know Jesus lived, died, and rose again for us. Through faith in all that Jesus has done for us, we now have heaven waiting for us. Through faith we acknowledge that we are sinners, that we have done many wrongs... but we also know and confess that Jesus has saved us from all of our sins and HE has earned a place in heaven for all of His faithful children.

As our Apology says, "But since Christ was given to us in order to bear both these sins and penalties as well as to destroy the reign of the devil, sin, and death, the benefits of Christ cannot be recognized unless we understand our evil." And without knowing our true nature, without knowing how sinful we truly are... we cannot appreciate the comforting and loving message of the Gospel. Without a knowledge of our sins, we cannot appreciate all that Jesus Christ has done and suffered for us.

And with this knowledge in hand, knowing that I have sinned but that Christ has redeemed me, has saved me from all of my sins, well now I too can fight against satan. As Melanchthon says, "However, just as the devil is not conquered without Christ's help, so we, by our own powers, are unable to free ourselves from that slavery." And this is true, without Christ we are forever slaves to sin and to satan; but now that we have been redeemed, now that we have been bought back we can fight the good fight and we can overcome satan... with help from God.

And we know that throughout this life, temptation and sin will never disappear. Satan will always be trying to get us to slip up and come back to him, bowing the knee to all of the lies he offers... and it is in those times that we need the strength that Christ provides the most. In times of temptation and in times of trial we need to remember Christ and His means of Grace. We remember our baptisms which promise us the forgiveness of sins and a faith that trusts in God. We remember God's word which not only gives us faith but strengthens the faith that God has placed within us. We remember the Lord's Supper and when we receive the very body and blood of Christ we receive also the forgiveness of all of our sins. Throughout life, temptation will also be present, but with Christ on our side we can fight temptation and lean on Him for all that we need.

Dear friends in Christ, just as Jesus was tempted by satan in the wilderness, we too will be tempted. Satan will offer us many things to pull us away from God... and I pray that we can remain steadfast as Christ did. Instead of

relying on yourself and your smarts and your good looks... rely on God and His word. Rely on everything that God's word has to tell you, not only how satan tempts, not only that you fall into temptation, but most importantly that you have a Savior who has redeemed you... and while He was tempted in every way you are, He was perfect and He was perfect for you.

Today we also celebrate the baptism of young Maverick Schuster. God has taken young Maverick into His family and God has washed away all of his sins. Maverick will face many temptations in his life; yet, praise be to God that now God is fighting for him... and Maverick has a Savior who lived and died for him.

Every day we remember our baptisms. We remember how we too were brought into the family of God. We too were cleansed by the washing of rebirth to a new life in Christ. And how in our baptisms we have put on Christ and His perfect white robe of righteousness.

Thanks be to God that while temptations lurk,
He has overcome all temptations. Thanks be to
God that while I am not perfect Jesus was. And
thanks be to God that though temptations
appear, His Son will help me to fight those
temptations through His word and through His
sacraments.

Thanks be to God. Amen.