

Sermon: 1st Sunday in Lent

Text: Matthew 4: 1-11 : The Temptation of Jesus

Theme: Temptations and victory!

Goal: To analyze how we are tempted by the devil and how God gives us victory through Christ.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: We have three characters in our lessons for this First Sunday in Lent: Adam (and with him Eve), the devil, and Jesus. Adam appears in the Old Testament reading (Genesis 3) and in the Epistle to the Romans 5:15-19. The devil appears in the Old Testament reading and in the Gospel. Jesus appears in the Gospel and in the Epistle, and, in a hidden way of a prophecy, in the Old Testament reading as well.

Let us go through these three characters and see what these texts have to teach us, to warn us, and to comfort us.

I – Adam and Eve

Our first forefathers, created by God perfect and without sin, fell into temptation. They had only one commandment to obey: “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” (Gen 2:17). But when the devil came and put a question mark to God's word, the woman began to doubt. She “saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasant to the eyes...she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband.”

They didn't resist to the temptation. They had freedom to eat every fruit of the garden; but they ate just that forbidden one. They made the wrong choice. They fell into temptation. - Do you know a similar story in your life? And the consequences that follow...

We read in Romans 5:12: “Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.” Like a hereditary illness, or like HIV/AIDS, sin contaminated all humankind.

II – The devil

The devil knows our weaknesses. He knows what we like more or what we need. He doesn't tempt us with what we don't like or we don't need. Therefore temptations are so dangerous.

As the devil tempted Adam and Eve, - and got them to fall! - so he tempted Jesus as well. He wanted to put Jesus out of the way to the cross. He wanted to “shake” Jesus' confidence in His Holy Father. He tempted Jesus showing Him an easier way to get the kingdoms of the earth.

The issues of the three temptations are not bad by themselves. We need the daily bread; we need to trust in God and to be sure that He sends His angels to protect us; we can have power and authority as Christians. The problem is to move the focus of our lives from God's purposes to the devil's purposes as we get the daily bread, as we look for security, and when we are in a position of power.

Jesus resisted to the temptations quoting the Scriptures: “It is written!” Even when the devil mentioned the Scriptures, Jesus rebuked him with another text from the Bible. - God's Word is sovereign. We need to know it well and should not have doubts about it to overcome the temptations.

III – Jesus

The third character is Jesus. Genesis three has the first prophecy about Him, and He is called as “the seed of the women”, or as “the offspring of the woman”, who would crush the head of the serpent, of the devil.

When Jesus didn't fall into temptation, and when he rose again from

the death, He crushed the head of the devil. Jesus showed that He is stronger than the devil, and His victory is our victory by faith as well. He reversed the way of death, which Adam had led all humankind to. Instead of walking in darkness He invites us to follow His paths of light.

Romans 5 says: “Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man (Adam) the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man (Jesus) the many will be made righteous.”

Hebrews (2:15; 4:15) says: “Since the children have flesh and blood, He (Jesus) too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” - “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have One who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet He did not sin.”

IV – We

But there is one more character in these stories: WE! If we don't put ourselves inside these Bible texts, they remain just simple texts. We need to apply them to our lives.

Like Adam and Eve, like Jesus, we are tempted daily. Satan doesn't lose time with his followers. He has his mission among the Christians, to catch them to his kingdom again. Because he was not able to catch Jesus, he tries to capture the Christians. We need to be aware how smart the devil is and how he approaches us.

But we have God's promises and strength. Paul wrote to the Ephesians (6:17): “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against... the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in

the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."

To the Corinthians Paul wrote (1 Co 10:12-13): "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."

Conclusion: Martin Luther said: *"You can't stop birds from flying over your head, but you can stop them from making a nest in your hair."* This applies to the temptations. They are here, every day. Jesus tough us to pray: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

The 40 days of Lent reminds us of the 40 days that Jesus spent on the mountain being tempted by the devil. It is a special time of preparation to follow Jesus on His way to the cross and to the empty tomb. Through the Word of God and the Sacrament God gives us strength to grow in our faith, to resist the devil and the temptations, and to be conquerors in Christ! Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle
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