

Sermon Matthew 4 1 11 1st Sunday in Lent 1 Year Series

Sermon: 1st Sunday in Lent

Text: Matthew 4:1-11 (v.1) – The Temptation of Jesus

Theme: We have a Victor!

Goal: We are weak, but our Victor is strong to fight for us and to give us victory!

Dear Friends,

Introduction: We are going to compare the two temptations we have in the readings for today: When Adam and Eve were tempted by the devil; and when Jesus was tempted by the same devil. – Try to put yourselves in their shoes and try to link the details of the stories to your personal struggles against temptations and against the tempter himself.

I – The Word of God

The tempter began doubting on God's Word. The devil said to Eve: "Did God really say, you must not eat from any tree in the garden?" (Genesis 3:1).

The tempter distorted God's Word. Adam and Eve were allowed to eat from any tree in the garden, but not from a specific tree. They got only one commandment to obey, and the devil put doubts about this.

"Did God really say?" is a question raised nowadays by many churches and people. *Did God really say that this and that is sin? It was so in the past, but now we have to interpret it differently...*

And so, for many, the Bible does not mean THE truth any more but it only contains some truths. They do not consider it as God's Word anymore, but in their opinion it contains some words of God. And many churches are going far away from the truth of the Bible, following their own doctrines and revelations.

The devil knows the Bible better than we. But he is an expert in distorting God's Word and misusing it. He even quoted a verse from the Psalms when he tempted Jesus, saying: "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down (from the highest point of the temple); for it is written: "God will command his angels concerning you, and they

will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone” (Psalm 91:11,12).

Jesus replied to the three temptations quoting also the Bible, but in the right way. We have to accept the truths of the Bible as they are, and not select what pleases us or what doesn't please us.

Luther explained the Sixth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, "And lead us not into temptation", saying: *God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory.* (Small Catechism). And in his hymn "A Mighty Fortress", Luther stated: *One little word subdues him* (the devil).

II – The human pride and power

After putting a question mark on God's Word, the devil went on with his temptation. He attacked human pride and his desire for more power.

To Adam and Eve he said: "When you eat of it (the prohibited fruit) your eyes will be open and you will be like God!" (Genesis 3:5).

To Jesus, he offered "all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor".

The desire for more power is the root of many conflicts, in the family, and in the world. And many still fall into this temptation.

What was Jesus' reaction? We quote from Philippians 2:5-8: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on the cross."

Adam and Eve were created perfect human beings. And they wanted more, they wanted to become like God!

Jesus was and is God; and he became a human being, like us, living and dying for us.

Humbleness is difficult to practice, and we stumble at this temptation, wanting more and more till we succumb among earthly things that we cannot take with us when we depart from this life.

III – The basic needs

A fruit and bread played a big role in both temptations. Food, and other basic needs as shelter, work, love, security, play important role in our lives. Most of our time is spent to have these basic needs. They are necessary, and it is not wrong to work for them. It is even part of God's command before the man fell into temptation. But we need to know how to create a good balance between our physical needs and our spiritual needs.

Jesus replied to the devil: “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” This means: Bread alone doesn't guarantee us eternal life. We need it for this life, of course. But the Word of God gives us the true life, eternal one. How much and how often do you feed yourself with the Bread of Life, God's Word, Jesus Himself?

IV – The consequences

Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise due to their disobedience. And God put angels not to allow men to go back to the Paradise. They lost their immortality and they brought death into the world. All their descendants are born mortals – even us.

Jesus won the first round of this fight with the devil, and God sent angels to serve Him. Many other rounds happened, and the devil tried in many ways to hinder Jesus' ministry and to divert Him from His goal. Jesus won the many fights one by one. The last round took place on the cross. It seemed that Jesus had lost the last round when He died. But this was like a strategic stop. When He rose again on Easter Sunday, He came back with all His power and glory, and defeated Satan, sin and even death! He brought life, eternal life back to humankind, and He shares it with us. Those who believe in Him, in

spite of the temptations we still suffer, have forgiveness and eternal life! We have a Winner, and His victory is our victory!

Conclusion: Luther described this battle in a very strong and realistic way in his battle hymn *A Mighty Fortress is our God*. I invite you to read it with me and to note how he describes the devil and his strategies, and how he describes Jesus and His victory! (LSB 657):

1. A mighty Fortress is our God, / A trusty Shield and Weapon;
He helps us free from every need / That hath us now o'ertaken.
The old evil Foe/ Now means deadly woe;
Deep guile and great might/ Are his dread arms in fight;
On Earth is not his equal.

2. 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.

3. Though devils all the world should fill,/All eager to devour us;
We tremble not, we fear no ill,/ They shall not overpower us.
This world's prince may still/ Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none,/ He's judged; the deed is done;
One little word can fell him.

4. The Word they still shall let remain/ Nor any thanks have for it;
He's by our side upon the plain / With His good gifts and Spirit.
And take they our life, / Goods, fame, child and wife,
Though these all be gone,/Our victory has been won;
The Kingdom ours remaineth.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 05 March 2017