**Mark 1:9-15**

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. **10** And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. **11** And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” **12**  The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. **13**  And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him. **14**  Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, **15** and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

**“Christ Turn The Tempted To Him”**

Blessed Lent to all the baptized from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. The first Sunday of Lent always reminds me of those reality TV shows on surviving. We are not talking about some island where people hangout and vote each other off. This is where they drop a person off in some secluded location, blindfolded with barely anything, and viewers get to watch how they handle the whole ordeal.

This is what happens on the first Sunday in Lent every year. The Son of God from His baptism is thrown out into the wilderness. Of course, what He must face is more than survival against a fallen creation. The problem is bigger than being somewhere, but has to do with someone. This adversary, Satan, does not play by the rules and will especially kick you when you are down.

St. Mark in his Gospel account has no time, like Luke or Matthew, to take up the story on the birth of Jesus. Unlike many leaders today, Mark already in the first chapter is not afraid to name the enemy. This was important for Christians in a predominantly Roman World. Distraction by various evils and trials easily diverted attention away from the real adversary, Satan.

God tests His saints throughout the ages. The purpose is to increase faith in His Word. In contrast, Satan by his tempting stands ready to do just the opposite. He seeks to destroy faith in what God says and let all die in their sin. If it were not by God’s grace but our efforts. Surely, the loss would be self-evident before Satan. Yet, as promised God’s Son has crushed the serpent's head. Jesus passed the test let the tempted turn to Him.

The Father by His Son proves the truthfulness of temptation. Those glorious words after Jesus’ baptism set the tone. “This is my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” How much does God show He is on our side! Nothing held back the Spirit from sending Jesus immediately into the wilderness. Where others are prone to lesser tempters, like Samson with Delilah or Zacchaeus with Money. Satan actually got in the face of God’s Son.

Now there is no doubt the deck was stacked. Satan was going to lose to Christ, but the tempting was no less agonizing. God’s Son felt the whole experience fully as man regardless if He could pass the test. The book of Hebrews makes the point, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

Those forty days were a front on attack by Satan. However, sabotage and terrorism still followed Christ throughout His ministry. When crowds wanted to make Him an earthly king, Jesus had to leave. When the Pharisees wanted to trap Him in His words, He exposed their hard hearts. When Peter denied the messianic way of the cross, He saw the threat saying, “Get behind me Satan.” Constant was temptation to the point of own His suffering and death for God’s Son. Jesus now offers His unwavering life as the blessed gift able to stand against Satan in our lives.

The tempted need help in all times of our temptation. Lent is a time to take off the blind folds. It is to face who is eager to attack those baptized into Christ. St. Paul tells us, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12)

None sits on the sidelines with temptation. None can act secure as if they cannot fall or have figured out. Can you name the hungers and fears the Devil gladly uses against you? He is an enemy that knows what our Old Adam wants, which is daily to lead us into laziness, selfishness, gluttony, drunkenness, lust, greed, despair, unbelief, and all kinds evil. Some feel temptation in a greater way than others, but all bear with trials until death.

So it is the way among the baptized. A bull’s eye marks us in Christ. We are taught to pray, “lead us not into temptation.” Covered in the righteousness of God’s Son means Satan will not let up. Yet, Christ has promised the tempted He can help. Since temptation is certain in life, Christ stands with us along the way so we are never alone. Whatever you face, God has felt the threat of it all promising His sacrifice has not failed you.

The joy of Christ is to carry us through temptation. Every Sunday of Lent remains a little Easter. Our theme throughout this season is sadness tempered by a silver lining. “Come let us fix our eyes on Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame…” (Hebrew 12:2). It means the way of escape is not by our strength, but a sure foundation upon Christ as Lord and Savior.

The devil faces off with you because forgiveness is the treasure Jesus gives His saints. The world continues to dangle attractions, but God attracts us to Himself by His love for sinners. The Old Adam keeps raging within only to hear prayerful words, “lead us not into temptation.” In this wilderness of the world, God tests us to find refuge and strength in His Word. It means the spirit of our baptism drives us to Jesus.

As Abraham found a ram for a sacrifice, so God’s Son is your deliverance. His answer to our temptation is to come closer to Him. It is to “take and eat, take and drink” His victory over Satan to be our victory. His sacrifice helps us to resist what is evil and even when we fall restores us to what is good. Much temptation came at the loss of John the baptizer. It can be the same as we watch weekly Christians martyred over sees. Lent still carries on by Word and Sacrament with Jesus proclaiming, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Jesus passed the test let the tempted turn to Him. The saints are survivors in this wilderness of the world. They look with Christ for the life of the world to come. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.