**Luke 4:1-13**

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness **2** for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. **3** The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” **4** And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’ ” **5**  And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, **6** and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. **7** If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” **8** And Jesus answered him, “It is written,   
“ ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’ ” **9**  And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, **10** for it is written, “ ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ **11** and “ ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’ ” **12** And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ” **13** And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

**“Lead Us Not Away From Christ!”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Entering into Lent may be with repentance, but we have a fight song among the baptized. “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” holds out the fact that the Devil has more than met his match. Jesus as the Second Adam takes back everything humanity lost so long ago. This is why after His baptism Jesus by the Spirit went into the wilderness. Only when alone and helplessness was the Devil tempted enough to show himself and take a crack at God’s Son. Just as we seek to prevent bad things from happening, the Devil does the same. His goal was to stop Jesus even before He got started with His ministry.

Every first Sunday of Lent begins with the temptation of Jesus. Of course, there is a temptation for us with today’s text. If Jesus defeating the Devil is simply a good example for us to follow, we miss the point. Jesus is not saying, “Hey, this is how you are to fight the Devil” and then steps out of the way. The second verse of our sermon hymn is honest to our situation stating, “With might of ours cannot be done, soon were our loss affected; but for us fights the valiant One, whom God Himself elected. Ask You, who is this? Jesus Christ it is, of Sabaoth Lord, and there is none other God; He holds the Field forever.” For Jesus to hold the field means even after securing salvation. He does not sit back to watch how well we do against the Devil’s attacks. In this wilderness of life, we are not alone Jesus fights for us against the Devil.

Now when we consider going to battle. Most figure a well fit, rested up, and equipped person is what you need. Yet, this is the very opposite in the way God wins against the Devil. Jesus proves that in weakness there is a firmer Word of God for life. This kind of deficiency Israel felt while wandering as a people in the wilderness for forty years. Their reliance on God was everything for their preservation. It is in such a state of frailty that the Devil seeks to question God’s goodness. This temptation Jesus felt as He hungered for food denied to Him by His Father. However, where Israel only wanted food for the day, Jesus as the Word made flesh knew what preserved life. He said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’”

Lent uncovers the value of God’s Word when life leaves us hungry. The difficulty is that the wilderness appears not so empty. Much of what a person needs for life we have, but oddly enough the Devils’ temptation only works more effectively against us. When weakness or loss does come, it is like jumping into a lake during the winter. The shock of being in this wilderness can intensify unbelief in the heart toward God. In other words, those that hungered before us in weakness were strong. They did not surrender and sell out God’s Word as happens so easily today. More belongs to life than bread alone; Jesus secures that fullness before the Devil. He is the bread of life, so even weaklings like us can receive life from Him.

The devil enjoys conflict and so it is not surprising history is full of them. Humanity looks to build great kingdoms by their efforts and ideals. Yet, for Israel, the Promised Land was a gift. When they came into it they were to offer first fruits saying, “And (the Lord) brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.” In the same way, Jesus promises the authority and glory of His kingdom comes by grace. Still, the devil set before Jesus, “all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time…” Instead of a single kingdom, Jesus could have many and all their benefits. As Israel wanted to be like the other nations, so the Devil makes a bargain for something better, but it had conditions. Jesus knew this was no gift, but a gimmick of glory. He said, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’”

Lent tells us that Christ’s church has been scattered throughout the kingdoms of this world. It means that rather than settling down we need to wander for a bit in this wilderness. Jesus did not take the easy way out. There was no conformity to anything but the cross. He told Pilate, “…My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). The milk and honey from this Promised Land is what comes by Jesus’ sacrifice. Forgiveness and salvation God has not kept for Israel, but poured out unto the nations. By baptism, we received the mark of this kingdom and grace given from Christ. It teaches us daily to drown the Old Adam and to rise with New Adam, Christ. His authority and glory is free from the Devil. There are no conditions with Jesus, because like the Promised Land, His kingdom comes as a gift. It is justification to believe what He has built for sinners and to confess by our lives this good news against the Devil.

Since Jesus bested the Devil twice, it was only fitting to fight fire with fire. The Devil imitates Jesus, but being more a cheap knock off than the real thing. He quotes scripture, but like a con artist makes them say what he wants them to say. As Adam and Eve defied God in the garden, so Jesus on top of His Father’s house was to defy His Will. All other ways, even jumping off the temple Jesus would find refuge. Only the cross guaranteed a path where the Father would judge His Son in the place of sinners. Israel always avoided judgment, but not Jesus. Jesus proclaims victory by the spectacle God wills to save a sinful world. Jumping to death was small compared to joining Himself to sinners by the cross. What the Devil quotes are words from Psalm 91, the soldier’s psalm. Israelites used it as a battle cry. The victory cry Jesus was going to offer up to the Father would change everything. His sacrifice even had the power to silence the Devil. Such arrogance had an answer Jesus stated, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Lent tells us the love of God enlists us into a battle with a way through the wilderness. There is much raging by the Devil, especially at the end of days, but his time is short. All temptations by the devil for Jesus to bypass the cross failed. It means fear has no place, since One is faithful to any that follow Him. Jesus brings His victory to weary soldiers in battle with the Devil’s attacks. Bearing hardship, disgrace, and sorrows is to trust in a victory not won by our hands. It to receive from Christ what He wills and His will is nothing less than to serve His servants. By Word and Sacraments, the soldier’s Psalm goes with us against the Devil. God assures you a Christian life under the cross has good news for, “When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation” (Psalms 91:15-16).

In this wilderness of life, we are not alone Jesus fights for us against the Devil. We have this life from what He has promised by baptism into His Name. We have the armor to protect us in the fight by our Lord’s Supper gathered with all the saints before us. More than an example, Jesus holds the field. There will certainly be battles, but Lent reminds us that the victory remains in Him. Amen. Now the peace of God which pass all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting Amen.