

**March 1, 2009**  
**Lent 1**

*"Jesus' Victory Is Our Victory"*

---

**MARK 1:12-15**

---

*At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him. After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"*

How did your week go this past week? Do you ever think to yourself, "I wish this were the week the Lord is returning in all of his glory?" If the Lord does not return, this week will be another tough one for all of us in one important arena of our lives. Satan, our arch enemy is once again planning all sorts of booby traps to lead us into temptation and sin, hoping even to blow us to pieces if he can. In the Lord's Prayer we pray so fervently, "Lead us not into temptation."

Temptation comes from within. Jesus said, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" (Matthew 15:19). You can never eliminate evil in the world because it is embedded in the hearts of every human being on this earth, even a small child. That is why we see the need for baptizing our babies.

Temptation also comes from the devil. See this plastic worm, wiggling in the water, with a sharp treble hook. The poor fish cannot resist it. The sharp treble hook digs deep into the flesh. The fish pulls at the line and the treble hook digs in deeper. Evil spirits carefully design strategic temptations that are intended to lead us deeper into sin and ultimately destroy us.

Temptation also comes from people living around us. Satan uses people, even people we know and love, to invite us into sin just as he used Adam's loving wife Eve to offer the forbidden fruit to her husband. Jesus said that we are to be in the world but not of the world.

Today we want to spend some time listening to these words from the gospel of Mark as they describe to us the victory that Jesus won over temptation. As we shall see that victory is also our victory.

**See how the battle is won**

Jesus was tempted. Listen to the word of the Lord again as it tells us, "At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days being tempted by Satan." Jesus was tempted immediately after his baptism. He was sent out into the desert by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by the devil. The Greek word used here for sending Jesus out is a strong word used mostly for throwing something out. The New King James Version translates this more literally with the words, "Immediately the Holy Spirit drove him into

the wilderness." The Holy Spirit wanted Jesus to rescue us with a decisive victory over Satan.

When you are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you can expect to be sent out into the world, and be subjected to every temptation of Satan that is possible. If you were baptized in the name of the sun, moon and stars in some witch's coven that was gathered in a grove on a moon lit night, Satan would not care about you. If you were baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, then get ready for some very personal attacks from Satan. Satan cannot stand to see people baptized in Jesus' name, covered with his righteousness, and buried with him by baptism into Jesus' death and resurrection. Part of the heavy cross you bear for Jesus is the daily battle with Satan that gets more difficult the more you resist.

Jesus was tempted by the devil. Here you have the head crusher and heal bruiser going toe to toe in the ultimate cage match. Jesus empties himself of his power as God, and steps into the desert fully human, tempted to the very core of his being, tempted in all parts as we are, yet without sin. The book of Hebrews also tells us, "Because he suffered when he was tempted he is able to help those who are being tempted." He suffered when he was tempted. Just as a magnifying glass such as this can focus the sun's rays and even start a piece of paper on fire, the devil and his evil spirits focused their temptations on Jesus.

You remember the temptations. "Why don't you turn these stones into bread?" That was the easy path to follow. Warm fresh bread, best bread ever made, just out of the oven, covered with butter and some honey. That would have short-circuited God's plan to have Jesus tempted as we are. "Jump down from the temple. Let the angels catch you. Impress the crowd." Once again that would have short-circuited God's plan. Jesus' ministry was not to impress the crowd, but serve and give his life as a ransom for many. "Bow down to me and I will give you all the kingdoms of the world." Was this temptation crude and clumsy? Not at all! Think of what Jesus could do with the kingdoms of the world under his total control. He could have the whole world dancing in harmony and the songs of the 60's could come true. We would not even need a stimulus package.

Jesus was in the desert with the wild animals. Think about that. The Son of God who created the world, must find places that are safe to sleep at night away from lions, bears, poisonous snakes, scorpions and spiders. The wild animals were nothing compared to the temptations sent by Satan. Jesus was victorious with the Word of the Lord. He quoted the Scriptures with such well known words as "Man does not live alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." He shows us how we can overcome temptation with God's Word, as Martin Luther says in his famous hymn, "One little word can fell him!"

So exhausted was Jesus in this forty day battle with Satan that angels came to minister to him. Angels protect us and watch over us as we travel, as we walk through public buildings filled with germs, as we catch our foot on a crack on the sidewalk and keep our balance instead of falling. Psalm 91 says, "For he will command his angels concerning you to keep you in all your ways. They will lift you up in their hands so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." Look at Jesus being ministered to by angels as he wins the battle for you. Look at the angels that were there ministering to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed so hard that his sweat fell to the ground as great drops. "My Father if it is possible let this cup pass from me, not my will but yours be done."

The victory that Jesus won over Satan is also your victory and mine. We don't do very well with the temptations that are set before us. Satan loves to hear us make excuses for our sinful actions as Adam and Eve did. Then he has us where he wants us. That is why Jesus called him a murderer from the beginning and the father of lies. Satan even accuses us day and night before God's throne, but then according to the Revelation we overcome him by the blood of the Lamb. Jesus matched every temptation ever thrown at him by the devil, and came out victorious. He lived a perfect life for 33 years on this earth not to show us up or to imply that we can be accepted if we try our best. He declared to us that the victory was won for us. Some day on judgment day when you are asked by God whether you won every battle against sin, you can actually say, "Yes" because Jesus did it for me. Satan's head has been crushed.

### **Hear how the kingdom is ours**

We have seen Jesus win the victory for us, now let's listen to him announce this victory to the whole world. "After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come' he said, 'The kingdom of God is near, Repent and believe the good news!'" John the Baptist was put in prison. Later he would be beheaded by King Herod in a most gruesome and horrific death. Amid all the violence, evil and problems in the world, Jesus still comes proclaiming the good news of God. He tells us that the time has come and the kingdom of God is near.

The time is today not tomorrow, the time is here now to repent and believe the good news of the kingdom of God.

I am holding in my hands a clock. During this coming week we will constantly be looking at our clocks and watches to make sure that can make our appointments. Within these moments of time facing us this week, we will experience periods when we get frustrated with how we live our lives and give into temptation. As Paul said, "For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-- this I keep on doing." Yet there was a time in history when everything was perfect. That perfection existed in all its glory in the life Jesus lived. There was also a time in your life when the Lord made this clear to you and you came to believe. To repent means to totally change our minds about how we are saved. We have this moment in time created by God when we give up thinking we can get away with sin. We give up thinking we can save ourselves. We are turned around to believe that Jesus has won the victory for us. That's what repentance is.

The kingdom of God is near. The Lamb of God has entered the ring and he has defeated the old serpent, Satan, the evil dragon. The Lamb sets up a kingdom that lasts forever. The Lamb, King of kings and Lord of lords, invites you to share in the greatest blessing of his kingdom. He wants you to have his love that lasts forever, a love that never changes, that always sustains you. As Martin Luther said so triumphantly and victorious in his great hymn: "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 do what they will -- Hate, steal, hurt, or kill -- Though all may be gone, Our victory is won; The kingdom's ours forever!"

See your king coming to you with the greatest treasure in the world. He has given you a

victory and he has a love for you that will never change. We close with these comforting words from Romans 8: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Yes, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. The victory is ours. Amen.