



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

I don't know about you, but I am not a horror movie fan. Strange events take place, people disappear, and eerie noises come from behind closed doors. And then the actor or actress goes to open the door and viola the evil that is so obvious, triumphs again. In fact, a particular commercial annoys me just the same, but guess it also makes me remember, Gieko. You know the one, where the four teenagers are running from something and they have a choice to go to the basement or jump in a running car, but instead they go to hide in the barn behind the swinging chainsaws. Why do people make poor decisions?

Well, I think it is because of poor horror movies and dumb commercials like that one that today we have made the devil into a caricature. We certainly don't encounter the devil or evil as portrayed in them. As Christians we should recognize that the devil is way more subtle than portrayed in movies. I also think as Lutherans that we do not talk about the devil in a way that might be helpful to us. We tend to think of the devil as something that happened years ago in the Garden of Eden as a serpent.

Looking at our Gospel text for this morning, we can only imagine how Jesus felt being in the wilderness fasting for forty days. This wilderness was dry, barren, blazing hot during the day and freezing cold at night. Almost nothing

can live there, not even cactus. And after 40 days, Jesus is weak from hunger and certainly very thirsty. Jesus is vulnerable in every way humanly possible.

And up pops the devil, according to Luke. It is not the devil of movie or commercial fame, but the real deal. It is really the devil or Satan that approaches Jesus, not the horned beast that children dress up as on Halloween or the one that appears in bad dreams. He is the devil that uses logic on us in our weakest moments and in this story, he is confronting a weakened Jesus. Remember that Jesus is both human and divine at the same time. So, what the devil is trying to do here is separate the divine from the human. By doing this, the devil hopes to be able to break Jesus. We all would agree that is a difficult concept to understand, human and divine at the same time. And the devil here is not successful in separating the two in Jesus. Yes, he is humanly hungry, but he is still God.

The devil comes to us in our weakest moments as well. It may be a subtle temptation, but we now know that Jesus understands that temptation as he experienced it first-hand as a human. God understands what we, as his creation must face at the hand of the evil one. He truly gets it folks.

Look at it this way, if Jesus were only divine, he could never have faced the devil's trials and temptations. He would never have known how powerful the devil is to humanity. And if Jesus were only human, then God would not have been privy to how we encounter or experience the devil and his temptation. That is what makes our God so extra special. It is crucial to our salvation that Jesus is both human and divine. It enabled him as God to have the full human experience. In all of history, our God is the only one who comes down to earth as a human to be human among us. God loves us so much He came down to earth to experience exactly what it was like to be human, to be us. What an awesome God we have.

In our weakness we must admit that we are not God. We would not have had the same ability to turn a stone into bread even if we were hungry enough. Only God could do that. And in fact, Jesus did not use his divine power to overcome his human hunger. That took great fortitude. In fact, all three temptations took restraint by Jesus to not use his divine power to overcome the devil. And what does Jesus do instead? He stands firm and quotes Scripture to the Devil. Jesus stands true to the devil's tests as He knows that He must remain on the path to the cross for you and for me. Jesus resisted the

devil to serve God. His father sent him to redeem all of humanity and that was his calling. And to do that Jesus had to fend off the evil one.

And so, our lesson today brings us a great message that God knows what it is like to be us. God knows our weaknesses because he experienced them as well. Jesus came to us as a human, lived as a human and died a horrible death as a human. From that Jesus learned that we are not strong enough to fend off the devil ourselves. And so, God comes down to us and lifts us up. With the Father, Son and Holy Spirit the devil has no chance to claim our lives. But it is still important that we are aware of the subtleties of how the devil works. We need to be aware that the devil is real. He loves stalking humanity when we are at our most vulnerable. His temptations are real. But the good news here is that God knows, God understands and marked us with the cross of Christ, we are forgiven, and we are saved. **AMEN**