

**Invocavit (First Sunday in Lent): March 10, 2019**  
**“Jesus: Led By The Spirit”**

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. On this Invocavit Sunday, we will focus on our Gospel Lesson Matthew 4, especially these words, “**Matthew 4:1.**”

Invocavit, or call, is the name of this day. It comes from the words of Psalm 91, where God says, “*When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.*”<sup>1</sup> As the entire Scriptures are about Jesus, this Psalm is also about Him. Man cried to God for a Savior since the curse of returning to dust was for all Sons of Adam. Adam fell into temptation, as we recalled in Genesis this morning. In the curse of the serpent, Man was given a wonderful promise: a Savior would come. Man called to God to be faithful to His promise, and “*when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*”<sup>2</sup> Man called, and God came to rescue and honor Mankind.

In order to do that, today’s Gospel reading is of essential importance. The point of Jesus’ temptations are to speak about His work. It is not just an example for us to follow. While that is certainly a part of it, and from it we learn how to battle with the devil; that is, there is only one weapon, one tool that is to be used, as there is only one that can be effective; the chief point, the main take from this text is the Work of Jesus. In order to rescue Man, He had to be Man. In order to right the wrongs, He had to be do the wrongs right. He had to succeed where Adam failed.

So He begins this rectification of Man’s folly immediately after His baptism. This was to show that the Christian’s life is a daily duel from baptism to the grave. The Christian life is a battle with the devil, a conflict with the world, and a struggle with the flesh. Immediately after baptism, the Holy Spirit places you into the world to live out your lives in glory to God and in service to your neighbor. He gives you the honor of being His child, then places you in various vocations in the world to serve Him in righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 91:15

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 4:4–5

It must be highlighted from verse one, the Holy Spirit led Jesus out into the wilderness. Matthew says the Holy Spirit leads Jesus out; that is after baptism, Jesus is led to the place where faith gets lived out, and so to be a perfect man in your place, Jesus had to do this, and do it right. Mark says the Holy Spirit, drove, or cast, Jesus out into the wilderness. Jesus did not go by His own power, the Spirit placed Him out there. This is important, and Luther gives a beautiful answer to why, and I am just going to read it,

*“[This was] to show that all tribulation, adversity, persecution, trial, affliction, sickness, cross, and suffering come from God and are laid on men not for their ruin but to bring them to call on God in time of need. As the psalm says, ‘Call on Me in time of trouble, and I will deliver you; so shall you glorify Me’ (Ps. 50:15). Neither devil nor world can do anything adverse to us unless God permits them, for ‘even the hairs on our head are numbered’ (Matt. 10:30). Thus ‘God is faithful who does not let us be tempted above our capacity, but causes the temptation to have an end, that we may be able to bear it’ (1 Cor. 10:13). He also wishes to teach by this that one is not to choose a cross for himself and put it on himself, and subject himself to danger without necessity, but rather to wait for God to put one on him. There will be enough suffering and temptation in its time. Whoever willfully endangers himself without the Spirit’s moving when he could have avoided it, tempts God. We are not to seek tribulations; they will come in due time. And when they are here, let everyone remember to hold and bear the cross with patience for God’s sake. This is why the Evangelist says, ‘Jesus was led into the wilderness,’ not ‘went on His own impulse.’ ‘Those whom the Spirit of God moves are children of God’ (Rom. 8:14), but those whom their own spirit or a fraudulent spirit moves do not come to much good.”<sup>3</sup>*

So Jesus is led, or cast, into the wilderness where He is tempted by the devil in the same way Adam was. Will He live by thought, word, and deed, to fear, love, and trust in God above all things? The temptations were conducted over the course of 40 days, and culminated in these three basic realities. It is also important to note that Christ was alone in these temptations. As we are weakest to fall into temptation on our own, where we have no one to rely on but our sinful flesh, so Christ was alone. Solitary times are good, and really are the true school to learn just how weak our faith is, and how deep our sinful nature really runs.

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<sup>3</sup> Spangenberg, *The Christian Year of Grace*, pg. 107

The first temptation was leveled at trust. Jesus was attacked by the very basic care of food for the body, and unbelief of the goodness of God. Luther rightly calls this a temptation of misfortune. It is a temptation of lack, and want. When you seem as though you do not have enough, or maybe you truly do not have enough, where does the heart look? For what does it long, and in whom does it trust? It is a temptation that stirs you to anger, impatience, and unbelief. “If God is not caring for my basic needs, then someone else must. I must do it myself. Perhaps God is too busy for me, and so must I look elsewhere?” These are damaging and damming thoughts. Here one seeks the treasure, not the giver of the treasure.

We are going to skip the second temptation for a minute, and jump to the third, because there we find the opposite of the first. In the third temptation, the adversary tempts Jesus with prosperity. Rather than not having enough, Jesus is tempted with abundance. When you have things in abundance, there can be an equally greater temptation to forget the giver, and focus on the gift. It can lead you to lust, honor, and find delight in whatever is high. Your base senses are all abated, so now what can you do to get the next high? What can you do to feel a rush, to feel like you are alive? Man strive after all kinds of earthly pursuits in the name honor, favor, riches, pleasure, power; anything that will attempt, in his own mind, to keep away poverty, want, need, and misery.

Matthew records the second temptation, right in the middle of one and three. In this way, it is at the center. The second temptation is aimed at the word of God. It is a spiritual temptation that deals with blind tricks and twisted errors that seek to mislead reason from faith. Peter rightly describes Satan, “***Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.***”<sup>4</sup> If he cannot get you to fall by lack or by abundance, he seeks to devour your faith by error, blindness, and a false understanding of the Scripture. This is the hardest. We are all basically aware that things of this world can come and go, at least to some degree. To attack faith, is a brilliant move by the adversary. If he can get you to believe in a different god, to renounce your faith, or even twist God’s word to trick you into believing that you worship a false god, and don’t even know it? Brilliantly deadly.

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Peter 5:8

I know I spoke on different translations last week, and I don't want anyone to get the wrong idea. I don't want anyone despairing because they are reading a certain translation, or a different one. It is an appeal to study together. It is to bring these various translations, and speak about them openly together and find where the biases are, so that we all together can be strengthened. As the deceiver is constantly using deception, we must constantly be on guard. This is what Jesus has done.

The second temptation was to test God. While they were on the pinnacle, or the upper wing of the temple, there were stairs that they could use to easily descend to back to the ground. There was already good means to get down, so why devise a new way. If it at broke, why fix it? To tempt God is truly dangerous, and horribly simple; "God, if you do this for me. I will do this for you. God, if you are really there, if you are really listening, then please give me a sign, do this thing, do that thing that I want." It is not wrong to pray for your needs. It is not even wrong to demand from God, the psalmist's do it a lot. It is wrong to not commend those demands to God. It is wrong to trust your faith to the fulfillment of those demands based on your sight, or your timetable. The second temptation is to get Jesus to do something for His own soul, by His own powers.

The roaring lion roared, and shuffled, and glared his teeth, but Jesus would have none of it. Jesus could have banished Satan with a word, and yet, endured each trial for your sake. He knows your life of constant attack, constant battle, constant awareness of the lion lurking the bushes, or pouncing in full-battle assault mode, and He stayed. He endured it to the cross, and as the lion tried to take one last bite, that death would be death's undoing. Jesus did the work He was supposed to do. He did not fall into temptation. He lived the perfect life, keeping the entirety of the Law, and so His death was the perfect, unblemished sacrifice. He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. He was nailed to the cross. He gave up His Spirit, and that Spirit is given to His Church. At Pentecost, it was visibly given to the Church by preaching and something the people could see. Today, it is given in the same way; preaching and by something His people can see.

The Word, the Word, the Word, that's what this day is about. You cried, and He has answered. When He was tempted to fear, love and trust in something else, something not God, hear His responses. These are great Gospel words.

To the temptation of lack, which can cause a great fuss, and agitate impatience, Jesus declares, "***Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the***

*mouth of God.*”<sup>5</sup> He goes right to the written word for comfort and strength. He does not come up with his own words, or trust in his own feelings. He doesn’t say, “Well, that was a long time ago in Jewish confirmation class. I know that there was a thing we talked about. We have always done it a different way, but maybe this way is ok. I might try it.” He doesn’t even say, “I’m not sure about it. This doesn’t feel right.” He says, “***It is written.***”<sup>6</sup> He simply speaks God’s word, and leaves it to have the authority.

For the Children of God, those whom the Spirit moves, those that through faith, through baptism, now live in newness of life, there is another way. Luther observes, “*This saying, all Christians should lay hold of when they see there is lack and want and everything has become stones, so that courage trembles, and they should say: What were it if the whole world were full of bread, still man does not live by bread alone, but more belongs to life, namely, the Word of God.*”

On the other hand, in the face of abundance, Jesus says, “***It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’***”<sup>7</sup> Fear of the Lord, in the Old Testament, is associated with the proper worship of the Lord. It is to see that the Lord is God, and you are not. It is a great confession of where faith is to be placed. It is to see that this God, who made the heavens and the earth, became one of you. He knows every temptation, every suffering, every pain and trial; which means, you have a God who knows. Not just knows, but knows what to say and what to give. Those others things, power, money, gender, feelings, government, are not gods; they are gifts from God.

To your attacks on faith, to your struggles with love, Jesus says, “***It is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’***”<sup>8</sup> You do not have to test God. That’s is backwards. The Father has issued the test, and your brother, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us, has passed. The Word of God endures forever. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and here we see it. The Love of God was made manifest. The Love of God was poured out on the cross. The Love of God is poured out in the chalice, for you. Here we proclaim that everlasting Word, and the Lord’s death until He comes. Here, for you, is rest and refreshment from the daily battle with sin.

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew 4:4 Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 4:4, 7, 10

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 4:10

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 4:7

The font enters you into this conflict, and you live your lives in the pews. The Holy Spirit casts you into the wilderness to endure trials, and carry crosses. So, you have a body, and soul and you have deal with people. The people can have your good works of love and mercy. Your body can have the good food. Your soul can have the Good Word, as it hears and feasts from pulpit and altar.

On this Sunday of calling, I call to God for you. Please do not neglect the meeting together, here, for you. Those crosses are impossible to carry on your own. There are others who will bear them with you in love, right here. There is One, who has born it to the grave for you. That is why we gather. That is why you sit and look this way. That is why this day is cannot be about you. It is to ever remind you that in your daily battles, the victory is already won. It is here for you, given to you, constantly in your eyes until that time when either you are called to your heavenly home, or Christ comes first. This is why we position the casket at funerals where the body is looking to altar. It is to ever, and always, keep our faith focused and centered on Jesus. He comes to rescue you. He comes to bestow you with honor.

“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 vict’ry has been won;

The Kingdom ours remaineth.”<sup>9</sup> Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

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<sup>9</sup> A Mighty Fortress Is Our God LSB 656:4

**Prayer of the Church**  
**First Sunday in Lent (Invocabit)**  
**10 March 2019**

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs. For all who have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, that they would continue to receive the forgiveness, life and salvation He delivers in His Church, and thus remain clothed in His righteousness and holiness, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all pastors in Christ, that they would always preach the Gospel with a sense of urgency, recognizing that the favorable time and the day of salvation is always now; and for the Lord of the harvest to send out more servants, that the Gospel would be heard throughout the world, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all those being tempted to doubt their Christian faith, that they would be filled with the Holy Spirit and find comfort, peace and assurance in the One who overcame Satan's temptations in the wilderness, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For Donald, our president; Kim, our governor; and all those who serve us at the federal, state and local levels of government, that they would serve with integrity and honor, and for the benefit of all, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the sick and shut-in, the hospitalized and recovering, and all those currently undergoing trials and tribulations in this vale of tears, [*especially Carmen, Susan, Larry, Phillip, and those we name in our hearts,*] that they would be comforted by, and find refuge in, the sure and certain promise that nothing can separate them from the love of God, which is theirs through Jesus Christ, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who celebrate another year of earthly life, especially His servant *Sharon* that God would cause her to grow in wisdom and grace, and that she would be strengthened to trust in God's goodness all the days of her life; let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who come to the holy altar this day, that they receive the very body and blood of Christ in repentance and faith, with reverence and awe, and to their abundant blessing, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all the faithful who have departed this world in faith, let us give thanks to the Lord; and for those of us who remain in this valley of the shadow of death, that Your holy angels would be with us, so that the evil foe may have no power over us, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. **Amen.**