

1st Sunday in Lent 2/22/15
Mark 1:9-15 B

THE SPIRIT IMMEDIATELY DROVE HIM OUT INTO THE WILDERNESS. 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.

When Jesus was baptized, the heavens were opened, the Spirit descended on Him like a dove, and a voice came from heaven saying, "You are My beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." Immediately after He was baptized, that same Spirit who had descended upon Him in the form of a dove, drove Him out in the wilderness to be tempted by Satan for forty days.

When Jesus was in that wilderness 40 days, being tempted by Satan, the Evangelist Matthew tells us he tempted Him by telling the stone to become bread; throwing Himself off the pinnacle of the temple; and by telling Him he would give him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. Mark doesn't tell us how it is that Satan tempted Jesus. All that Mark tells us is that Jesus was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan and a few other details -- He was with the wild animals and the angels were ministering to Him.

That's nice, Pastor, you say. But what does that have to do with me? Well, let me tell you about you, Dear Child of God.

When you were brought to the baptismal font, heaven was opened, the Spirit of God descended on you, and God's voice pronounced, "This is my beloved Son; this is my beloved daughter; with whom I am well-pleased." God is well pleased with you not because of who you are or what you have done, but because of who Jesus is and what He had done for you in baptism. By water and the Word, He washes away all your sins. He

joins you to Christ, so that you die with Him and you rise to new life in Him. You, who were an enemy of God, are now a child of God, a child in whom God is well pleased, a child of God who the Spirit drives out into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan.

What? Do you think Jesus is the only baptized child of God driven into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan? Think again. Think again about what the wilderness is. Its not exactly your vacation destination. Its a place where wild animals, dangerous animals, live. Its a place where you can die very easily from hunger, thirst, or the bite from a scorpion. You won't meet many people there. Nobody really lived there. For the most part, people are just passing through to get through that wilderness as quickly as they can. The wilderness was a most desperate place of chaos, despair, demons, sickness, death.

I can guess what you're thinking. "I'm glad I don't live there, Pastor." Really? If you take an honest look at the world in which we live this day, maybe its not all that different. Hear me out on this one. Yes, it would be terribly difficult to die of hunger and thirst, but chaos and waste is all around us. We have access to state-of-the art medical care, yet sickness and death seem to reign. We are strangers here; we are just passing through. Take a listen to what Scripture says about us our present life,

"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pe 5). Jesus says, "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves (Mt 10)." Peter says, "Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul" (1 Pe 2). Paul reminds us, "Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Ph 3).

Its a wilderness, all right. And if its a wilderness, that means its a place Satan tempts children of God. Mark doesn't tells us how it is Satan

tempts Jesus. But, we sure know how He tempts us, don't we? We know his tricks; we know his schemes. He comes to us with his lies to bait and badger us on all sides. He will do everything he can to drag us away from faith in Jesus and hope and joy in the Gospel to despair and discouragement. He will come after us to get us to blaspheme God. He wants us to doubt the will and work and Word of God. Those are the kinds of temptations he brings upon us. But, know what? There is no reason for us to fall prey to him and his schemes.

The GOOD NEWS for us is that for us fights the Valiant One. The writer of the Hebrews says, "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" (He 4). That High Priest is Jesus. That's the Son of God. That's the Son of God who was in the wilderness forty days being tempted.

He is the One who died for you. His death on Calvary's cross and His Easter resurrection are the means by which God has crushed the devil's head. These are the means by which God has removed all the power from Satan; the means by which He renders the temptations of Satan meaningless.

That is the victory God gives you. You were baptized into Christ. You were joined to Him in His temptation, death, and resurrection. His victory over Satan is your victory over Satan. When Satan comes to you, to badger you, to hound you, tempt you, and lead you away from the will and work and Word of God into despair, shame, and all manner of sin, one little word can fell Him. And that little word is ... Jesus. He stands by you. He brings His gifts to you by means of grace, the Word and the

Sacraments, to strengthen you, to increase your faith, and help you in living a holy life.

Scripture assures us, “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it” (1 Cor 10). Jesus is on your side when you are tempted and He will be with you to see you through it.

Jesus’ story is your story. When Jesus was being tempted by Satan in the wilderness, the angels were with Him. Jesus’ story is your story because you were joined to Him in Holy Baptism. When you are tempted, the angels of God are there, to take care of you. Remember what the Scriptures say about angels, “Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation” (He 1:14). “For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways” (Ps 91). The angels are there with you, guarding you, protecting you, leading you in the way you should go, to turn you away from the temptation Satan throws at you.

All Mark tells us about the temptation of Jesus is that Jesus was in the wilderness 40 days being tempted by Satan, with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to Him. From that, we know that when we are tempted, we will not be tempted beyond what we can bear and God will provide a way out. From that, we know that when we are tempted the angels of God are with us, ministering to us, protecting us, leading us away from temptation to the will, the work, and the Word of God. And, we know Jesus has given us His victory over Satan.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

