

1st S. in Lent 2/26/23
Romans 5:12-19 A

FOR AS BY THE ONE MAN'S DISOBEDIANCE THE MANY WERE MADE SINNERS, SO BY THE ONE MAN'S OBEDIENCE THE MANY WILL BE MADE RIGHTEOUSNESS.

“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Mt 3:17). Those are the words God the Father spoke from heaven at the Baptism of Jesus.

What happened was this: Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John. And when Jesus is baptized, the heavens are opened, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and within the Jordan's sacred flood, the Father spoke from heaven of His Son, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (cf. Mt 4:13-17).

And, then our Gospel lesson for today begins, “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil”. Immediately, **immediately** after His baptism, Jesus was led into the desert to enter into battle with the evil foe for us and for our salvation.

Do you see what Satan is doing in the wilderness? At our Lord's baptism, God had publicly declared that Jesus was His Son, the long-promised Seed of woman who had come to crush the head of the Tempter. The father of all lies tries to get Jesus to doubt and not believe what His Father had just said at His Baptism. “**If** you are the Son of God ... **If** you are the Son of God ... All these I will give you, **if** you will fall down and worship me”.

In the wilderness, the faithfulness of the only-begotten Son of God was put to the test. What would He do? Would He do that which Adam and Eve did **not** do? Would He do that which Israel did **not** do? Would He

do that which all of humanity -- you and me, daily, do not do? Would He fear, love, and trust in God above all things? Would He trust the words that His Father had just spoken of Him?

Our Old Testament lesson for this Sunday is the account of the fall into sin. It was in the Garden, immediately after the fall in sin, that God promised that He would send His own Son to save us. In the Garden, the Father spoke the first promise of a Savior, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Ge 3:15). From that very moment in the Garden, the devil knew the Messiah was coming as the offspring of a woman to crush his head.

The devil knew that Jesus was that Seed of woman, the One who would crush head. And, his only hope for winning the final victory over God was to keep Jesus from the cross.

So, he did as he did in Eden and throughout each day and hour and minute of our earthly life, the father of all lies came to the Son of God to try to get Him to doubt, just once, the Word of His Father. With just that one sin, God's plan of salvation for us poor sinners would never be realized and we would be lost forever.

II. There is Good News for us in the temptation of our Lord: Even though we are unfaithful to our Father, Jesus was faithful. The Bible says this of Jesus, "We have [a high priest] who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin" (He 4:15). Even though attacked and tempted by the father of all lies, Jesus remained faithful.

In the desert, Jesus willingly suffers the temptation you suffer. We could not withstand the devil's temptations so, Christ had to do it for you, in your place, as your substitute. "So by the one man's obedience the many

will be made righteous,” St. Paul teaches us in our lesson. Here is the Good News for you: Jesus is obedient to the Father’s will. Jesus battles and overcomes the devil for you.

Christ Jesus won the victory over the devil. The waters of His baptism washed all the world’s sin upon Him, including your sin and my sin. The devil could not keep Him from the cross. He did go to the cross, to die naked between two thieves. And there, by His death, He crushed the head of the devil, so that the evil one can taunt and haunt us no more.

III. Baptized into Christ, we become one with Christ in death and in life. His obedience to the Father’s will, His victory over death and the devil, His righteousness – all become our very own. At your Baptism, God spoke over you the same words He spoke of His own Son, “This is my beloved son, this is my beloved daughter, with whom I am well pleased (Mt 3:17).”

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther writes to parents bringing their child to be baptized: "Remember, therefore, that it is no joke to take sides against the devil and not only to drive him away from the little child, but to burden the child with such a mighty and lifelong enemy."¹

When we become one with Christ in our baptism, we take sides against the devil and he becomes our mighty, lifelong enemy. Having been rescued from sin, death, and the devil, we are now in ark of the holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints. And it would seem, at least to our way of thinking, that our struggles should be over. And Jesus -- He should be like our magic genie, doing miracles to suit our fancy, like turning stones into bread and commanding His angels to protect us from life’s owies and boo-boos. No cross to bear. Just a life of ease.

¹ AE 53:102

But that is not the case; for we feebly struggle with the devil, the world and the weakness and doubts of our own flesh. It is no joke to take sides against the devil. Satan's head has been crushed. But, he will not go down without a fight.

Satan, the father of all lies, comes to you to make you doubt and not believe and trust what God has said of you at your baptism. "**If** ... **If** God really loved you, you would not be sick. **If** God really cared for you, you would not in despair. **If** God really forgave you all of your sins, you would not feel so guilty. If, If, If..."

Ever since the evil one whispered in Eve's ear, "Did God really say," we've fallen for his lies. We have followed in the footsteps of our first parents to delight and find pleasure, search for meaning and purpose, in that which God forbids. We have not feared, loved, and trusted in God above all things. We have believed the lies of the father of all lies.

The Christian life is the life of repentance and repentance is nothing more than a return to the waters of our Baptism, Luther writes in his Large Catechism. When we return to the waters of our baptism in daily repentance -- sorrowing over our sin and believing in Jesus Christ -- our Lord forgives and forgives and forgives. As far as the east is from the west, God removes our sins from us and remembers them no more.

Baptized into Christ and living in the wilderness of this present age, the devil, the world, and our sinful nature try to mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and sins. But, we have Jesus.

Do you recall the story of Noah? God instructed that righteous man to build an ark, and then God shut Him into that ark. The flood waters came to cast that boat adrift, the rains beat upon it, the wind and waves threatened that to drown Noah and his family. But, the storms could not

overcome the ark. So it is that, just as Jesus kept righteous Noah safe in the ark through the flood water, He will keep us safe here in the ark of His Church through all the temptations of the valley of the shadow of death. He will bear us safely home, where we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever and ever, without end.

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

Luther, Martin. *Liturgy and Hymns*. Edited by Ulrich S. Leupold. Vol. 53, *Luther's Works, American Edition*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965.