

“Sola Scriptura – The Word Alone”

Matthew 4:1-11

We have begun the 40 day Lenten journey. The church chose 40 days for this season as it corresponds to the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness being tempted by Satan. Our Lenten journey ends with Jesus suffering and dying on the cross at Calvary. The world does not want to deal with the suffering, bloody, and finally dead Son of God hanging on a cross. The world mocks us for placing our trust in the sacrifice for our sins and placing our trust in the Word of God which tells us of these things.

But these are the defining moments of Christ’s life. If Christ does not suffer, if Christ does not die on the cross, the happy, joyful season of Easter would be meaningless. If Christ did not suffer and die on the cross, we are all wasting our time here today, because there is nothing else that can take away our accountability for our sin.

Jesus Christ is defined by the giving of His blood on the cross. He is the final sacrifice for all the sins of the world. He is the suffering servant who is totally obedient to the will of His Father in heaven. He is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sake of His sheep.

It is in these 40 days of Lent that we witness Christ’s example of what it means to love unconditionally: to give completely of yourself. Christ certainly showed His great love for us when He suppressed His Divine glory

and humbled Himself by entering the world as a human child. However, Christ's humiliation was not just living as a human. His humiliation was that He was going to suffer more than any person who had walked the face of the earth.

Today's Gospel lesson tells us of His suffering at the hands of Satan, when Jesus was physically weak, and Satan tempted Him. And this was a time of suffering for Jesus. The book of Hebrews tells us that: "Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."

Hebrews continues and says that Christ is therefore able to sympathize with our weaknesses, because He has been tempted in every way – just as we are – yet was without sin.

In Christ's temptation in the wilderness, He shows that He was here to suffer and be tempted in every way that we suffer and are tempted. His suffering began long before the physical pain of being nailed to the cross – having carried the burden of all the sins of the world on His shoulders.

Even before His ministry began, could you imagine the torture that Jesus went through as a child? Could you imagine what it would be like to grow up with a perfect older brother who never did anything wrong – whose parents knew He was perfect because He was from God? Could you imagine the torture that His brothers and sisters and the children of Nazareth put Jesus through? There is evidence that leads us to suspect that James, the brother of Jesus, was not too fond of Him until after Christ's resurrection when James became a Christian and a leader in the church in Jerusalem.

Just as Christ suffered in every way that we suffer, Christ was also tempted in every way that we are tempted. In the wilderness, He was alone and hungry. Satan told Jesus to prove that He is the Son of God by performing a miracle and turning the stones into bread. By doing this, Jesus would accomplish two purposes. First, He would show that He has the power of God. And second, He would satisfy His hunger. What is so wrong with that?

Jesus knows that the proof that He is the true Son of God is not found in performing a miracle, but rather, the proof that He is the true Son of God is found in “every Word that comes from the mouth of God.” Every word of the Old Testament pointed forward to Christ. Jesus did not need to put on a miracle show to prove that He is the Son of God. If you want to know who He is, search the Scriptures.

Also, Jesus did not want to set the example of finding comfort in our time of trial in the physical things of this world. We do not live on bread alone. It is in God’s Word that we find life and peace and comfort.

In response to all three of Satan’s temptations, Jesus draws strength and gives a definitive answer from God’s Word alone. Being God Himself, Christ certainly had the wisdom, strength, and authority to answer Satan with His own words. However, in answering from Holy Scripture, Christ shows us that no matter how wise or strong in the faith we think we are, our best answers in times of trial and temptation are found in God’s Word.

As Martin Luther wrote in the Smalcald Articles (one of the last things he wrote before his death), “[We] must insist that God does not want to deal

with us human beings, except by means of his external Word and sacrament. Everything that boasts of being from the Spirit apart from such Word and sacrament is of the devil.”

What Luther is saying is that the devil is going to come at you with something that is meant to distract you from where God wants you to be. And like with Jesus, he is going to use things that are appealing to you. He has had lots of practice and he knows all of your weak spots. He certainly knows mine. And when we rely of something other than the sure foundation of the Word of God – whether it is spoken or joined to the visible element of a sacrament – if we look elsewhere for a source of strength, or comfort, or joy all that we will find is what Satan wants us to find.

God does not want to deal with us except through His Means of Grace. And this seems like foolishness to the world. There was a survey on the Internet this week asking what lengths you would go to so that you would not have to run a marathon. What unpleasant task (such as shaving your head) would you choose over running a marathon? One of the options of “unpleasant tasks” was reading the entire Bible.

The world mocks us. Just remember what St. Paul says, “God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are. Cherish “every Word that comes from the mouth of God.” Amen.