

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Lent 1
Saturday, March 5, 2022 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, March 6, 2022 at 9:00 a.m.

“Man Shall not Live by Bread Alone”

Luke 4:1-13

As we begin our Lenten journey, our Gospel reading takes us back to the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. To understand the full meaning of what Christ did by going out into the wilderness, we need to set the stage a little bit. This is the first thing Jesus did after His Baptism in the Jordan River. He begins His public ministry and then spends 40 days by Himself in the wilderness being tempted for those 40 days. Why would He do this? Shouldn’t He be preaching, teaching, or calling His disciples?

It seems like a waste of time and does nothing but open the door for Satan to tempt the Lord and put our salvation at risk. However, it was not a waste of time, but was necessary for our salvation to be complete.

When Adam sinned and ate of the forbidden tree, he was cast out of Paradise and sent into the wilderness East of Eden. When Christ comes to take away our sin, fulfill the Law, and restore creation, He departs the paradise of heaven, goes out to the wilderness, and does not eat. The Second Adam is not like the first.

You see this everywhere throughout the Bible. What we see happen with Jesus is that He either fulfills what could not be fulfilled under the old covenant, or He does the opposite of what was done by the first Adam.

Adam was not content with the place in life God had given to him. He

wanted to be equal to God – knowing the difference between good and evil. Christ, being true God, as St. Paul says in his letter to the Philippians, “does not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing; taking the very nature of a servant . . . And being found in appearance as man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross.”

The Second Adam had to undo the damage of the First Adam. He takes on Adam’s punishment and goes to the wilderness. Adam refused to humble himself before the Lord – Christ willingly suffered humiliation. Satan conquered Adam when he ate of the tree. Jesus conquers Satan in the wilderness when he refused to eat. And when Jesus wins the final victory over Satan, there is a tree involved in that also – the tree of the cross.

Satan comes to Jesus with his lies and half-truths, with his false promises that he can’t fulfill. The First Adam listened and believed the false promises of Satan. “If you eat, you won’t die. You will be like God.” The Second Adam did not yield to the desires of His stomach, and He repeatedly rebuked Satan with the Word of God – which is the greatest and most nourishing bread.

Jesus going out to the wilderness for 40 days is also reminiscent of the 40 years the Israelites spent in the wilderness. The Israelite’s lack of faith and their fear of not having sufficient food caused them to repeatedly murmur and rebel against God. Jesus does not succumb to the desires of His stomach. He lives by the Word of God, as Moses did on the mountain 40 days without food or Elijah did while fleeing from Queen Jezebel, also going 40 days without food.

This is not to say that fasting for 40 days is a dieting style to be advocated for all of God’s people, but in certain extreme cases, God has sustained His children without food or water for long periods of time. But this doesn’t mean they weren’t hungry.

And the temptation for Christ to recreate the miracle of manna in the wilderness is powerful. Over the past two years, I regularly fast on Monday and Thursday (I don't eat breakfast or lunch those days. With us restarting our Thursday morning Bible study at the Coach House, I am going to have to rework my schedule). I only skip two meals and I know how hungry I am by 5:00.

Jesus fasts for 40 days, I don't even go 40 hours. But as the Second Adam and as the Savior of Israel, it was Christ's place to not be like the Israelites and grumble about His empty stomach, and to not be like the First Adam and eat the food suggested by Satan.

Christ answered Satan three times from the book of Deuteronomy. He was nourished by the Word of God. And it was satisfying. Satan needs to be answered. It is Satan who whispers in our ear, "The Word of God; Sacraments; you're going to be satisfied with that?" The father of lies wants you to think that what we do here is no big deal.

Satan has one goal in mind. He wants you to be deceived about who God is. Adam lost sight of who God is. It is healthy for you to remember that this fight is about you. C. S. Lewis wrote, "In all discussions of hell we should keep steadily before our eyes the possible damnation, not of our enemies, nor our friends...but of ourselves."

Satan is after you, and he will attack you where you are weakest. He doesn't attack your strengths. He wants you to be confident in your strengths. He knows that pride will kill faith faster than any sorrow or hunger.

When we are tired and worn out from the pain and sickness and death of this world, or when we seem to have an endless hunger for things that God has not granted us to have, Satan is always looking for that "opportune time" to destroy you. We like to talk about Satan's attack on the world like we talk about

the war in Ukraine. We say, “It is a terrible shame that there is war going on over there and other people are being attacked and tormented. If this keeps up, it may someday have an effect on me and my family – beyond the price of gasoline.”

Satan’s war with you is not happening in a faraway place. No, he is attacking you and your family right here, right now. Maybe it is through pain and hardship; it might be through wealth and prosperity – Solomon’s greatest spiritual struggles came at the height of his wealth and fame. Maybe it is through distractions or seemingly righteous reasons. Satan always wants you to believe that you are in the right.

Yet, the truth remains that the Spirit of God only comes to us and only strengthens us through the Word and in the Sacraments. As I said last week, this is where we get to experience a “little bit of heaven on earth.”

We gather here in God’s House as living witnesses that “Man does not live by bread alone.” With our confession of the creed, we echo the words, “Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.” And we gather as the community of believers and pray for strength that we do not “put the Lord [our] God to the test.”

We are Adam’s children. We repeatedly fail just as he did. But the Second Adam has come. He has restored all that sin had undone. Christ departed the glory of heaven and suffered in the wilderness. We suffer in the wilderness of this sinful world. It may be for only 40 days. It may be another 40 years, but we live in anticipation that Christ’s return and the resurrection of all flesh is just on the horizon, and God’s Word will sustain you for as long as you need. There is only One Bread of Life. Amen.