

Yield Not to Temptation

Luke 4:1-13

Introduction

Oscar Wilde said, “I can resist everything except temptation.” We say it this way: “We sin every day in thought, word, and deed.” That’s what it means to be a fallen human being, born in original sin. During Lent, we mourn our sins and our sinfulness. We emphasize certain spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. While we recognize these things are beneficial to our journey with Jesus, we realize they do not pay for our sin, nor do they remove the problem of sin from our life. At the end of the day, we sin in thought, word, and deed. Since the fall, we are fighting a losing battle. There are three forces competing with us to bring us down and make us sin. They are the devil, this fallen world, and our sinful nature. So, what hope do we have? Paul says in **Romans 5: For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification (Romans 5:16b)**. Our hope is in the gift of justification through the forgiveness of sins. That gift is found in Jesus Christ. His death on the cross paid the price for all our sins, and He offers it to us today through the Means of Grace—Word and Sacrament.

Tempted As We Are

Hebrews tells us that Christ was *tempted as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15)*. That was part of His being the Sacrifice. He is fully divine and fully human. God cannot be tempted. But, in His humanity, He could be and was tempted to sin. It is vital for us that He resist temptation because any sin would have disqualified His sacrifice. The Lamb must be unblemished.

The Temptations

In this story, we see how to face temptation, instead of just saying, “Since I’m going to sin anyway, I might as well do it.” We might think that since we will probably never be tempted to turn stone into bread, bow to Satan, or jump off the temple these temptations don’t apply to us. Let’s see how they do apply.

Stone to Bread

The temptation to turn stone into bread was not a temptation to break the fast. **Verse 2** says that the forty days were ended. There would have been nothing wrong if Jesus ate. The sin was in using His divine power for His own benefit. Not only that, but He would also be doing this at the request of Satan. Doing anything Satan wants is sin. We don’t have the divine power to turn stone into bread. But we are tempted to be self-centered and think of our own needs and wants first. If He really wants us to love one another as He has loved us, we can’t be focused on ourselves. A good defense against greed and self-centeredness is almsgiving. It helps us to look to the needs of others first.

Worship Satan

The temptation for Jesus to worship Satan was about taking a shortcut. Jesus knew He would rule over all the kingdoms of the earth. But His path to get there was through the cross. The devil is offering an easy way out. Just bow down to Satan and You don’t have to go to the cross and die that horrible death. Of course, without the cross there is no salvation. Also, Jesus is to reign over the world in

righteousness. How can He do that if He has sinned? Finally, as the Son of God, He has authority over Satan. If He bows to him to get the kingdoms of the world, He's surrendering authority to Satan. The easy way out isn't the right way. If it doesn't cost anything, it's not worth it. A good defense against the sin of looking for the easy way is fasting. It helps us take control of our desires and wants.

Jump off the Temple

Satan quotes the Word of God and twists it to make it sound like Jesus would just be taking God at His Word by putting His life at risk. Jumping off the temple wouldn't be taking God at His Word but putting Him to the test. We put God to the test when we take His love and forgiveness for granted by taking our relationship with Him for granted. A good defense against that is spending time with Him in prayer. It helps us stay connected to God.

Resisting with Scripture

How did Jesus resist these temptations? He didn't rely on His divinity. He responded as a human being. He embraced His humanity and responded with Scripture, specifically, the Law. His answers all came from **Deuteronomy**, which means "second law." In **Deuteronomy**, Moses gave the Law in a series of sermons shortly before entering the Promised Land. This was a new generation who hadn't heard the Law at the beginning of the trip. Jesus embodies **Psalm 119:11**—*I have stored up Your Word in my heart, that I might not sin against You*. If we ever want to face temptation instead of giving into it without a fight, as Oscar Wilde, our only hope is to store up the Word of God in our heart so we can draw on it in times of temptation. We do this in Bible reading, memorization, and study. Not just favorite verses, like *For God so loved the world ...*, but verses from the Law as well, beginning with the **TEN COMMANDMENTS**.

Word and Sacrament

We also fortify ourselves when we take advantage of all the opportunities we have to hear the Word. The **THIRD COMMANDMENT** says to *remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy*. The **Catechism** tells us *this means we should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it*. When we hear it and when we receive it in the Sacrament of the Altar, God's Word has the power to forgive sins and strengthen our faith to be able to stand and face temptations instead of yielding. Life is about yielding. Yield to God, not temptation.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
