

Sermon for Feb. 17, 2013 First Sunday in Lent

Luke 4:1-13

Blessings to you and peace from God the Father, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
and the Holy Spirit. Amen

The devil is shrewd and crafty. Temptation lurks at every turn. Now those statements are **not all that new** to us as we **all** are tempted by the devil each and every day. The key for us is **how we respond** to those temptations by turning to God. As we read today—**Jesus is our example**—look to him.

On Friday morning when I sat down to write this sermon I was looking at the internet for just a moment before I began writing. This headline caught my eye, “Siblings Find and Return \$13,000, Get Criticized.” I thought, “Now that is interesting. Being criticized for doing a good deed.” So I read on.

The story was about a brother and sister from Eugene, Ore. who found a bank deposit bag lying in the street with \$13k in it. They returned it to the rightful owner. Great, good for them—right? Ryan Moi, 25, told ABC News that they've gotten lots of praise, but not everyone was so congratulatory. He said, “We’ve had mixed comments, you know, from people telling us that we should have kept it,

that we made a mistake, telling us no one would ever have found out." The devil is shrewd and crafty. Temptation lurks at every turn.

The brother and sister took the bag of money to their father's house and showed him what they had found. There happened to be a deposit slip in the bag, their father knew the business and the owner, so he took the bag and the money back to the business. The two young people confessed that they had daydreamed briefly about what they could do with such a windfall. Ryan is starting up a business, his sister is in college, and her laptop had been stolen. Ryan also confessed that there was a time in he and his sister's lives that, honestly, they probably would have kept the money.

This story helped me to reflect **more clearly** on our gospel text for today regarding being tempted by the devil and how easy it might be for us to look the other way. In our story we hear of Jesus being tempted **not only once** but **three** times when he was at his **most** vulnerable. Oh, that devil is a **shrewd and crafty** one for sure. He comes at you when you **least** expect it.

(If you would use your pew bibles and turn to the 3rd chapter of Luke), just before our reading for today, we had read about Jesus' baptism and the Holy Spirit descending upon him in the bodily form of a dove, then Luke goes on to list Jesus'

genealogy all the way back to Adam—the one who was originally tempted by the devil and you all know how that one turned out—he and Eve failed the test.

In our reading Jesus was sent out, full of the Holy Spirit, the **same** Spirit that was with him at His baptism. He was directed by the Spirit **out** into the wilderness. For 40 days he was **tempted** by the devil. The devil is **shrewd and crafty**. Temptation lurked at every turn for Jesus.

What this text for today tells us is **something about** who Jesus is as the Son of God and of the **trust** Jesus has in God. You may remember that this encounter with the devil happens **before** Jesus' ministry has even begun, it is before he speaks **one** word; it is before he calls **one** follower or heals **one** person. The devil does his best to **slam** Jesus with great temptation at a **most vulnerable** moment. But isn't that how the devil works? He does his best to **pin us up against the wall** when we have the **least** amount of strength to fight back.

Here Jesus was in the wilderness, famished. He had **not eaten** for 40 days. I would imagine a piece of bread might have sounded pretty good by then. The devil suggests a **short cut**, "Turn a rock into a loaf of bread. How much of a sin could that be?" But no, Jesus **resists** the devil's offer by **quoting Deut.** chapter 8 verse 3—"Man does not live by bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." In this response Jesus teaches that sure, the physical

dimension of life is important, but there is **much more to it** than that. If we do not eat physically eat, we may die, but if we do not get spiritual nourishment, the Word of God, to feed our spirits, we will **die spiritually** which would be much worse.

The second temptation comes right on the heels of the first. The devil wants to show Jesus that **all the kingdoms of the world** can be his if Jesus will just worship him. “Look, here are all the kingdoms of this world. All the power and wealth you can imagine. Come, worship me, give me your allegiance and it is all yours. You can have it all.” Jesus **slams the door shut** on the devil’s offer with a **simple statement** of spiritual reality. Once again Jesus comes back with a quote from scripture, **Deut.** chapter 6 verse 13, “Worship the Lord your God, serve him only, and take your oaths in his name.”

Whether it is a loaf of bread or the combined wealth of the entire world, what we worship will be our god (**small “g”**) and if the god we worship is not God (**big “G”**), the consequence for us is **spiritual wilderness**. Here is a short test of what we worship: “Does the God you worship fill your life with **meaning and purpose?** Does that God see you **safely** into eternity? Do you worship the god of the **material world?**” Something for us to **ponder** with all this talk of temptations. The devil is **shrewd and crafty**. Temptation lurks at every turn.

By the time the devil gets to the third temptation it is clear that Jesus will **not be swayed** from his spiritual foundation. The devil comes at Jesus from another direction. If he cannot get Jesus to **deny the spiritual** the devil will now **quote Scripture** himself. He quotes Psalm 91 verses 11 and 12, “For He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.” Once again **Jesus comes back** at him quoting **Deut.** chapter 6 verse 16, “Do not test the Lord your God.” That was it. The **spiritual warfare of back and forth** was over. The devil **departed** from Jesus. He left him alone—for now. Until an **opportune** time—which we all know will be in about 6 weeks when the devil enters Judas as he discusses with the chief priests and the officers of the temple police about how he might **betray** Jesus.

You notice today that **anything** the devil threw at Jesus in the way of temptation Jesus was able to **ward off** with Scripture. Jesus finds in Scripture the **words to give voice** to his trust in God. Because at the heart of each reply is Jesus’ **absolute trust** in—and **dependence on**—God for his **identity** and his **future**. And that is what I would like to **lift up** for each and every one of us. There is a **crucial link** between trust and temptation. There is a **spiritual depth and power** for life that is made possible as we **respond in trust** in God in the trials, temptations, and testing we endure in this life.

With trust in God all the **temptations of this world** have little appeal. If we rely on ourselves only and **do not trust in God** to be with us in our time of trial and temptation we **open ourselves up** to the idea that we can take matters into our own hands. We can take care of it ourselves. Trust is at the **heart** of our relationship with God, with Jesus Christ, and with one another. It is not always easy to trust as **too often** temptation is right outside our door and trials are nearer than we would like. Let us not forget that Jesus **went into the wilderness** anchored to the promises that God made to him in His baptism, while he was “full of the Holy Spirit”. Let us **hold tight** to our trust in God to be with us when the devil is most **shrewd and crafty**. When temptation is lurking at every turn.

I invite you to **turn to Jesus** when you are the **most vulnerable**, when you are the most **beaten down**, when you think there is **not one more thing** that you can endure, when the **devil has done his best** to defeat you. Remember that our blessed Lord and Savior was 40 days in the wilderness **going up against** the best the devil had to offer. What got him through was **trust in God**. Knowing that the **answers he needed** to combat whatever the devil threw at him was written in Scripture. Here is your answer folks. This book. **Trust the promises** God made to you that **God loves you** and **nothing the devil can put in your pathway** is more powerful than that!!! All thanks be to God. AMEN.

