

I Lent 2022

Sermon-Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

*2 Corinthians 6.1-10 St. Matthew 4.1-11*

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It was impossible for Jesus to sin. Satan knew Jesus was the Son of God. Satan knew his efforts to tempt Jesus would be useless. So why bother tempting him? What do we learn from Jesus' responses to the temptations?

When Jesus was baptized by his cousin John, God said, "This is my own dear Son, with whom I am pleased." Jesus then went off into the desert to fast and pray. Deserts and mountains were places went to encounter God. Moses received the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai. Elijah was taken up in a fiery chariot from a mountain. Jesus was transfigured on a mountain. Jesus was crucified on a hill. Jesus ascended back to heaven from a mountain.

Today people go to monasteries and retreat centers in the desert and on mountains for spiritual renewal. Lent is our time in the desert to refocus our spiritual lives on Jesus and learn from him how to say "no" to the Devil's temptations.

After 40 days of fasting and prayer Jesus was weak and tired. He was also very hungry. Satan saw this as his opportunity to break Jesus. The three temptations were all very attractive to anyone who was vulnerable:

First, Satan asks Jesus to prove he is God's Son and turn stones into bread. He already knew Jesus was God's Son. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy and told Satan man can't live by bread alone but from every word God speaks.

Second, Satan asks Jesus again to prove he is God's Son by jumping off the highest point of the Temple. Satan also knows the Scriptures and quoted Psalm 91...God promises angels will hold Jesus up and he will not even hurt his feet on the stones. The Devil attempted to use God's words against God...a really dumb move. Jesus again quoted Deuteronomy and said the Lord God is not to be tested.

Third, Satan takes Jesus up into a high mountain and promised he would give him all the great kingdoms of the world if he would fall down and worship him. (Satan would not have kept that promise...he is the Great Liar). Jesus told the Devil to go away. He quoted Deuteronomy a third time and said we are to worship the Lord our God alone and serve him. And angels came and helped Jesus.

What Satan did was take God's Word and twist it to what he thought was his own advantage. Jesus is the Word made Flesh who lived among us. He is the Second Person of the Trinity. The Devil never had the upper hand and he knew it...but he had to try anyway...that's his nature. The Devil knows he has a short time and he is going to do everything in his power to break us down too.

Temptation is a fact of life for Christians. We can expect to be tempted. We are most vulnerable to Satan's attacks when we are at our lowest point: tired, hungry, angry, alone, confused, depressed. Lent is our spiritual desert and like Jesus we may find ourselves tempted even when we are trying to renew our spiritual lives and do the right things. The Devil looks for any sign of weakness...and then tries to get us to let him in.

In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul tells us we can expect to be tested...but with every test (or temptation) there is a way out. In today's Epistle from his Second Letter to the Corinthians he talks about his own trials and tribulations and how God's Holy Spirit empowers us to remain strong even when we find ourselves in the worst possible situations.

Jesus is our way out. We learn from him how to resist the Devil and turn whatever tests and trials we might encounter during our time in our Lenten desert into triumphs and victory.

We can expect to be tested. Jesus said, "The world will make you suffer. But be brave! I have defeated the world!"

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