

Notes for Next Sunday
First Sunday in Lent

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Deuteronomy 26:1-11). The word "firstfruits" comes from the Hebrew word for "head," the "beginning" or the "chief" fruits. And so these could mean the first that comes up or the best that comes up; either way, the Lord wanted His people to give back to Him the best of what He'd given them. Although Moses described them as "some of the firstfruits," it was to be a widely distributed sample, some of the firstfruits "of all that you produce" – not just of fruits and vegetables but also of sheep and cattle. Israelites will not have acquired this land by accident, not by their own genius or military muscle. Their covenant Lord spoke an oath to their fathers that He would give them the land, and He did what He promised. (PBC)

Epistle (Romans 10:8b-13). Paul is practically begging his fellow Jews to believe and confess that Jesus is Lord. He goes so far as to how they might proceed. Paul says there is an inseparable link between faith as expressed outwardly and possessed inwardly. (TLSB) If a man confesses with his lips that Jesus is Lord, then he has Jesus as his Lord and he has peace with God. If he believes that God raised Christ from the dead, he shares the resurrection life and glory with his Lord. (Concordia Journal – September, 1983)

Gospel (Luke 4:1-13). This text is the account of Jesus' temptation by the devil. Some learnings about the devil:

- He will attack when we are in a state.
- His attacks can be very brazen, he even uses (misuses) Scripture
- He will not totally go away but comes back again and again.

From Jesus we can learn that the best defense we have to resist all of the devil's temptations is the Word of God. It covers every situation and never fails.

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – Deuteronomy 26:1-11

When you have entered the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, ² take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the LORD your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name ³ and say to the priest in office at the time, "I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come to the land the LORD swore to our forefathers to give us." ⁴ The priest shall take the basket from your hands and set it down in front of the altar of the LORD your God. ⁵ Then you shall declare before the LORD your God: "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. ⁶ But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, putting us to hard labor. ⁷ Then we cried out to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. ⁸ So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders. ⁹ He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; ¹⁰ and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, O LORD, have given me." Place the basket before the LORD your God and bow down before him. ¹¹ And you and the Levites and the aliens among you shall rejoice in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household.

26:1-11 *land...lord...giving*. These words recur repeatedly. The ritual offering of firstfruits reminded the individual worshiper that the Promised Land is God's gracious gift and is to be received with joyful thanksgiving. (TLSB)

26:5b-10a This brief recital of Israelite history is similar to a creed or liturgy. As the Israelites offer the firstfruits of the land, they remember their ancestors, who had been landless and suffered countless hardships in Egypt before the Lord finally delivered them. The worshiper's concluding words, addressed directly to the Lord, confess that this firstfruit offering is a gift from Him. (TLSB)

26:5 *wandering Aramean*. Reference to Jacob (Israel), who spent 20 years in Aram working for his uncle Laban and later moved to Egypt with his 12 sons. (TLSB)

26:10 *I bring the first fruits*. The first sheaf of the harvest given to the Lord as a token that all the harvest belonged to the Lord and would be dedicated to him through dedicated lives. So Christ, who has been raised, is the guarantee of the resurrection of all God's redeemed people.

EPISTLE – Romans 10:8b-13

⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: ⁹ That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. ¹¹ As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

10:8 *The word is near you.*† In the OT passage the “word” is God's word as found in the law. Paul takes the passage and applies it to the gospel, “the word of faith”—the main point being the accessibility of the gospel. Righteousness is gained through faith, not by deeds, and is readily available to anyone who will receive it freely from God through Christ. (CSB)

10:9 *confess with your mouth*. Faith and confession are two aspects of one reality; they constitute one life before God under the lordship of Jesus Christ. No man who has the Lord Jesus for his Lord remains a silent servant of his Lord, ashamed to acknowledge Him before me (Mark 8:38) (Franzmann)

10:9 *in your heart*. In Biblical terms the heart is not merely the seat of the emotions and affections, but also of the intellect and will. (CSB)

10:11 *will never be put to shame*. Believers in Christ await a forgiving Father, not a stern, condemning Judge. (TLSB)

10:12 *no difference between Jew and Gentile*. As all Jews and Gentiles are equally sinners (3:23), so the gates of God's mercy are open to all. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Luke 4:1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, ² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. ³ The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of

God, tell this stone to become bread.”⁴ Jesus answered, **“It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone.’”**⁵ The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.⁶ And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.”⁷ So if you worship me, it will all be yours.”⁸ Jesus answered, **“It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”**⁹ The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here.”¹⁰ For it is written: **“He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully;¹¹ they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”**¹² Jesus answered, **“It says: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”**¹³ When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

4:1 full of the Holy Spirit. This links this episode to Jesus’ Baptism (3:21-22) and reinforces the prominent role Luke’s Gospel gives to the Spirit. (TLSB)

4:1 was led by the Spirit. The Spirit with whom Jesus was anointed in his baptism, armed him for battle against the devil and was leading him in his forty-day wandering in the wilderness. The Spirit always accompanies Jesus in his work for our salvation, and the Spirit always reveals Jesus and his work to the believer. (CC p. 170)

4:1 in the desert. The desert is a chaotic place, a place of nothingness. The opposite of the desert is paradise, an oasis, a place of fertility. Jewish hearers would be reminded of Israel’s wilderness wanderings, where they were tempted and found wanting. (CC p. 170)

4:2 forty days. The number “forty” would recall Israel’s forty years in the wilderness (cf. Deut 8:2), the time Moses spent on Mt. Sinai (Ex 24:18), and Elijah’s forty days on Horeb, the mountain of God (1 Ki 19:8). (CC p. 171)

4:3 tell this stone to become bread. The devil always makes his temptations seem attractive. (CSB)

4:4 it is written. Like all other men, Jesus lives by bread, but not by bread alone. He shows all humanity how to live by the Word of God. Bread sustains physical life; God’s Word gives life. Thus, Jesus conquers the devil with Scripture. He uses the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. The implication here is that the Pentateuch is the Word of God. (CC p. 171)

4:7 worship me. The devil was tempting Jesus to avoid the sufferings of the cross, which he came specifically to endure (Mk 10:45). The temptation offered an easy shortcut to world dominion. (CSB)

4:10-11 The devil was adept at distorting Scripture and using it for his own purposes. This serves as a warning against those who skillfully misinterpret the Bible. (TLSB)

4:10 for it is written. This time Satan also quoted Scripture, though he misused Ps 91:11–12. (CSB)