

It is written

The gospel for this coming Sunday (First Sunday in Lent) is Luke 4:1-13. This is the narrative of the temptation of Jesus. There are two lessons in this text: One, that the devil is real and very powerful. Two, Jesus has the perfect remedy to everything the devil throws at us.

Some things to know about the devil's strategies:

- The devil wants to have the benefit of the home-field. The "desert" was frequently understood as the abode of demons and wild beasts.
- The devil always uses our weaknesses. Jesus had fasted for 40 days and his hunger was greatest and his resistance lowest.
- The devil seeks to create doubt. He did so successfully with Eve and he tries the same tack in his first temptation of Jesus when he says: "*If you are the Son of God.*" (v. 3)
- The devil is very bold in his acts. In his second temptation of Jesus, he promises to give Jesus the whole world if but Jesus would bow down and worship him. Jesus already owned the whole world.
- The devil lies and even twists Scripture for his purpose. In his third temptation the devil misquotes Ps 91:11-12.
- The devil is relentless. He did not go away when these events were over. Verse 13 says it well: "*And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.*" The devil used the religious leaders of Jesus' day as well as Jesus' very own disciples to try to trip up Jesus' ministry.

Comfort for us:

- Jesus provides us with the ultimate weapon, his Word, when he confidently proclaims "*it is written.*" Martin Luther had a great understanding about the power of the devil. In verse 4 of his "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," he has the phrase "The Word they shall let remain," Luther is echoing what Jesus says.
- The temptation of Jesus by the devil foreshadowed the conflict of the passion and Jesus' victory on the cross. Already the triumph is anticipated, although it comes in a way that one might not expect. We can celebrate with Jesus' victory while still in the midst of the battle.
- The Spirit always accompanied Jesus in his work for our salvation, and the Spirit keeps us in the one true faith even when we sometimes fall for the devil's wiles.
- Luther reminds us that the devil continually uses the world, and even our own flesh to tempt us.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, thank for giving me the hope that you and your Word are there for us when the devil comes with his temptations. Thank you for my baptism which allows me to start anew each time I fall for the devil's trickery. Help me to use your gifts of Word and Sacrament to stand strong against the evil one. Amen