



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

March 6, 2022

Pastor Randy Ott

1st Sunday in Lent

First Lesson: [Joshua 7:16-26](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 3

Second Lesson: [Hebrews 4:14-16](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Luke 4:1-13](#)

Marks of the Messiah: He Defeats Satan's Attacks

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Now is the day of God's favor. Now is the time of salvation. Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Do you know anyone that is competitive, like too competitive? The kind of person who when playing a board game and it doesn't quite go their way the board game goes the other way, off the table to see if gravity is still working. Do you know anyone like that? I saw someone like that this morning already. It was called a mirror. When I was a kid, I finally convinced my little sister to play a game because she never wanted to play games with me. I don't know why. She just didn't want to play games with me. I think we were finally playing Risk, and I don't care how much smarter you are than your little sister, the dice can still go against you when you're playing the game of Risk. That's the way it works. So when it worked that way, I remember the board going flying.

I don't care how competitive you are and how much you always want to win, you don't always win. That's just not the nature of things. You're not always victorious. I don't care how much you want to be. Nobody is. The most hypercompetitive people in the world, your Tom Bradys, your Michael Jordans, they didn't win every single game. Who in the world wins every single time?! Jesus. That's what we start Lent out with.

Every year we start Lent out with this Gospel about Jesus being tempted in the wilderness, because it's kind of Lent in a nutshell; Satan defeated, salvation complete. That's what we're preparing to celebrate at the end of Lent, with Holy Week, Easter and the empty tomb. The devil threw everything he had at Jesus and the devil lost. The devil is still busy throwing the board game all over because he's still attacking you and me constantly. Even though Jesus won the game, the devil still is attacking. So today let's see how Jesus defeated the devil in our place because we wouldn't be able to do it

to pay for our sins. But then let's also see the tools He used to see if we can get better at using those tools so that with God's help we can resist some of the temptations of the devil and we can live to the glory of the God who loved us enough to die for our sins. As a Christian, that's our goal. That's what we want to do. We WANT to thank Jesus. But we're sinners and we often screw it up. That's why Jesus came.

What had just happened? It starts out with something like how Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. He left the area of the Jordan. He had just been baptized by John the Baptist and was now beginning His public ministry. So He begins His public ministry by withdrawing into privacy, 40 days in the wilderness and doesn't eat during those days. In those days, we're told He is being tempted. It's a constant, ongoing temptation.

When I was a kid, I thought Jesus was tempted these three times and that was it. But if you read the text carefully, it's saying He was tempted and continually tempted. We are told of three of them. Probably because they are going to teach us something that we can know about our God and know about ourselves and put it into practice I would assume.

So after 40 days of fasting, He was hungry. That makes sense, doesn't it? He was hungry. The devil comes with a temptation that sounds kind of silly. ***"If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."*** He said that because Jesus was so hungry. What is the temptation? To do what the devil tells Him to do? I don't think it's just that. The temptation is to doubt that God is taking care of you. "Your Father sent you to this earth for these folks? And now you've been fasting all this time and you're so hungry and this is how He is treating you? He should take care of you better. You deserve more." Maybe if the devil would have said "cake" instead of "bread" Jesus would have done it. I don't think so but the temptation seems kind of silly. But the temptation at its core level is to doubt that God will take care of you.

Jesus answers it immediately by saying ***"...man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord (Deuteronomy 8:3)"***, quoting something the Holy Spirit had Moses write much earlier. He is saying "I trust God to take care of me. I'm doing my Father's will. I left heaven, became human, came to this earth, was baptized in the Jordan because of doing the Father's will and if right now the Father's will is that I fast and I focus and I see what my work is that is going to be ahead of me over these next three years and I devote myself to the Father's will, I trust the Father will take care of me." Jesus met the temptation head on and kicked it in the tail.

You and I don't always do that. You and I at times think God is not going to take care of us or He is not taking care of us the way we think He should be taking care of us. He's not doing the things that we need Him to do at the moment we need Him to do it and then the devil starts to get us to wonder, "Does God really love me? Why would He let

this into my life? Why would He let that hardship into my life? He's not taking good care of me. He's really not a loving God." That's the devil's temptation and just like a fish looking at the bait, sometimes you and I bite.

We don't always trust God perfectly and I would say one of the reasons that we don't, besides the fact that we're sinners and we're going to sin, is that we don't know God's promises well enough. We don't breathe and thank God's promises. We don't contemplate the things He went through in order to save us. Our God loved us enough to leave heaven, to come to earth and go through all of these things and endure agony on the cross so that He says **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"** ([Matthew 27:46](#); [Mark 15:34](#)); God forsakes God. I can't wrap my head around it, but that's what happened FOR you and then you and I think, because we don't have what we want, when we want, how we want, He doesn't love us? We don't trust Him? That's a whole new level of foolish, and yet we fall into that trap.

I think the thing we can learn from Jesus is that we have to get better at thinking, breathing Scripture that it guides our thoughts because then we'll recognize these temptations better. Then we'll have a tool to fight against these temptations even more and we'll know the incomprehensible love that our God has for us. I know we'll never know it fully. But we better know it better next year than we know it right now and five years from now and ten years from now (if the Lord gives us another ten years). Our goal is to grow and keep on growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ because that grace, the more we know that grace, the more we will trust that God will take care of us no matter what temptations the devil throws at us.

The second temptation that is recorded for us here has to do with taking the easy way out. In high school I was voted class laziest person. The fortune that the juniors gave to me is that I would become a millionaire by inventing a labor-sniffing device so I didn't have to work so hard. I guess that's what I was known for, I don't know. So this temptation would have been up my (and someone like me) alley because the devil's temptation here is to take the easy way out, to take a shortcut and not go through all the work it is going to take to redeem the world.

What does the devil say to Jesus? He comes to Him and it says: ***The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours."*** Jesus had come to redeem the world. The devil says "Okay, you're here to redeem the world? It's all mine. I'll give it to you." Which is a lie; it's not his. It's God's. But the devil is the father of lies. He doesn't come and speak the truth. He twists the truth. So he offers Him a shortcut, the easy way out. Jesus' answer was that He would only worship God. ***"You shall have no other gods before me."*** ([Exodus 20:3](#); [Deuteronomy 5:7](#).) It's the first and greatest commandment. ***Love the Lord your God with all your***

heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#).) Jesus just uses Scripture again to say "I'm not here to worship you. I'm not here to take shortcuts. I'm here to worship my heavenly Father by doing His will completely and perfectly as we had planned even before you angels rebelled, even before Adam and Eve fell and ate from the fruit of the tree. Even before any of that happened, we had this plan and I'm not going to throw it away now just to take the easy way out so that I don't have to continue on the journey to the cross. No!" Worship God and don't worship anything else. Again you see Jesus use Scripture. He uses it immediately, wonderfully, perfectly because He is the Savior.

But if God didn't take shortcuts to save us, why would we think we can take shortcuts to serve Him? But we do! We think there is going to be some kind of shortcut as opposed to the hard work at times that God puts into our lives. The ways that we are called to serve and honor Him, **whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God** ([1 Corinthians 10:31](#)). We think we can take shortcuts sometimes. We want to avoid the hard work.

Raising kids is hard work. They can be really annoying at times, because they are little sinners and little sinners can be annoying just like big sinners can be really annoying. It's hard work. The devil will tempt us; what did God tell parents to do? **Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord** ([Ephesians 6:4](#)). What shortcut have you, as a parent, taken that exasperates or embitters your child? Your job is to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord, which means to take the time teach them, train them so they know Jesus and that they know that by obeying you, they are actually serving God. Do you take the time to teach that? Or do you just say "Because I said so! Why are you asking? I said so! Go do it!" It's a shortcut. It's a well-traveled shortcut but it's failing our God in doing the hard work He has called us to do in bringing up our children in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We talked about that a little bit ago. That takes hard work! That means spending time with the Word, not just under an hour in a worship service once a week, but spending time in the Word daily, reading God's Word, thinking about it, not just letting your eyeballs see the words on the page but thinking about it. Then seeking to apply it in your daily life; that's hard work! Sometimes we want to take the shortcut of saying "I don't need to study it because they put a flower right about here when I was wearing a white gown, so now I know all there is to know about all there is to know about the Bible." Is it any wonder that we fall into the devil's temptation so often and take the shortcut? It's because we failed on the most basic level to get to know our God better.

Here is where you and I could be incredibly thankful that Jesus didn't take the shortcut because if He would have caved to any one of the devil's temptations, you and I would

be lost forever in hell. He did the hard work because He knew you and I wouldn't do it. He knew you and I would fail. He knew me and you are sinners, so He did the hard work and obeyed the Father perfectly, even up to saying **"It is finished"** ([John 19:30](#)), never once avoiding the hard work of being perfect in our place and being the sacrifice that pays for all our sins. This is what gives us this trust and this confidence that we can stand before God and know that He loves us, not because we've done so well, because it's not about us, it's all about Jesus.

The devil likes to twist that. The devil wants to twist it to make it not all about Jesus and make it all about something else. That's really what you see in the third temptation. The devil in the third temptation tries to twist God's Word to make it so it would suit what he wanted it to suit so he could lead Jesus away to something He thought would be more appealing or would get under His skin or whatever the case may be. What we have as the third temptation today is actually listed as the second and Matthew is more likely chronological order, but Luke is ending it up in Jerusalem because Jerusalem is the holy city. So he takes it to the last. He switches the second and third ones around from the time that they probably happened in order. That's what guys smarter than I am say. He finishes with the devil taking him to Jerusalem, the highest point of the temple, probably one of the surrounding temple walls and the building is on the top of it. He says, **"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here.** You all like to quote Scripture so here is some Scripture for you. It says in your Book of Psalms **'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'** So there you go Jesus, you Bible thumper. The Bible tells you to do that, so throw yourself off if you really believe so much and trust your God so much." Of course the devil twisted the passage a little bit because His angels are in charge of you in all your ways. One of the ways God wants us to go is not jumping off of tall buildings. That's kind of foolish.

Any of you thought today, "You know what I'm going to do when I get home today? I'm going to have some lunch and then I'm going to climb on the roof and jump off of it"? I don't think that's your normal way to go but the devil twisted it to say "Okay, you trust God, you want to quote Scripture, here it is. Here is some Scripture for you. I just cornered you. Now you're trapped. Now you have to do what I said because that's what the Bible says." But Jesus takes Scripture and had Scripture interpret Scripture and says, **"It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'** by jumping off of tall buildings."

[Psalm 91](#) is not given to us that says He will give His angels charge of you and all your ways to that I can drive to Green Bay with my eyes closed. That's not why God gave us that passage. That passage is there to tell us our God loves us and He is taking care of us in ways we can't see. He's not telling us to act like a fool. But the devil will tell us to because the devil wants us to twist God's Word. Sometimes you and I are eager to have God's Word twisted when it suits our desires and what our sinful nature wants.

Again, the only answer to not twisting God's Word is to actually know what it says. I find it fascinating when I talk to people and they tell me "Well Pastor, you know, people can make the Bible say whatever they want." Sure they can. So I say, "What do you think it says? How do you read it? What are you reading in there about this issue" or whatever we are talking about? You know what I'm usually met with when I ask that question? Silence or changing the topic because I think most people that say that are just flat out being lazy because they haven't taken the time to read the Bible to see what it actually says. They've heard someone else say it and it sounds like it has a hint of wisdom to it, "So I'm going to quote that and throw that out so now I don't have to do the hard work of actually opening up the book and reading it" because Leviticus can be pretty dry. I'll grant you that. So don't start with Leviticus. Start with something else. But get into the Word and let it guide and shape how you think and how you approach life. Take a small chunk of it, read it and then throughout the day, see how it fits. Start in the Psalms or one of the Gospels. Start with Philippians. If you're having a bad time, start with a book that centers on joy from when Paul was sitting in a prison cell. Find something and just start there and read.

Start reading it first of all by saying "Lord, open my eyes so that I can see great things in your Word because I'm not bright enough to see them on my own. I need your Holy Spirit." God will bless your time in His Word. You'll begin to see these temptations from the devil to twist the Word and make it say something it doesn't say. Then again, for the times that you don't and you aren't sure, you have brothers and sisters in Christ you can talk to, you have the church library you can make use of, you can come talk to one of your pastors and we'll be happy to sit down and talk about God's Word with you. I'd much rather talk about that than about maintenance projects. That's fun.

Just know that you have a God that loves you. He didn't take the easy way out. He was victorious in your place because at times you will fail because you are a sinner. But at times you will live to God's glory because the Spirit lives in your heart. The more the Spirit guides us, the more we will be the people of God that God wants us to be. The more we'll be a blessing to one another. The more we'll be a blessing to our community. The more we'll be a blessing to the world. That's what God has called us to do in response to this incredible salvation He poured into our hearts because He never lost and He never will. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ([Philippians 4:7](#).) Amen.