

1st Sunday in Lent

February 18, 2018

Matthew Ude

Mark 1:9-15 ⁹ It came to pass in those days *that* Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. ¹¹ Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." ¹² Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. ¹³ And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him. ¹⁴ Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

Lead us Not Into Temptation

"God indeed Tempts No One." This quote would seem to be in direct contradiction with what we read in the gospel reading

But here we see that although the Spirit lead, yes even, drove Jesus out into the wilderness, nevertheless it is Satan who does the tempting

God purposely sends Jesus out to a place where he will be tempted, but God himself does not tempt Him. Many would say, "what's the difference?"

Satan tempts people, that is to say He wants them to fail, and he is hoping that they fail, he wants them to sin. God on the other hand tests people that is he wants them to succeed, he prepares them and when they are ready he sends them out to pass the test.

Since the Olympics are on right now we might use the analogy of a competitor. God is like your coach, he might well put obstacles in your way and make you do difficult things over and over so that you learn how to overcome. But Satan is like your competitor from Russia who might use any and every trick he thinks he can get away with to make you fail, to take you out.

Another difference is necessity. Temptation is unnecessary for Satan, but from God it is not unnecessary but must be done. The Spirit drove Jesus, there is necessity there. This is something that must be done.

Since it must be done however, God sends Jesus out on to the battle field, since he knows that He can get the job done.

Think back to the story of David and Goliath, Goliath had to be taken care of, but no one wanted to do it. Imagine yourself in that position, would you want to be the one to go out and face Goliath? Since it had to be done the Lord sent out one who could do it

Same thing is true here. It is clear that this is something that must be done; Adam and Eve were tempted and fell into Sin. If Jesus is going to save us he must undo what they did, he must face that temptation and prevail. Since it is something that must be done, how glad we are that it is Christ who does it for us.

How many of us would make it a single day in that wilderness? If you had the power to turn rocks into bread would you go 40 days without eating?

We are like one of the men of the Israelite army, everyday afraid to face Goliath, everyday hoping the king doesn't pick me and send me out there. Then we see David go out, and what a relief it isn't me, and then he wins, and what a relief that enemy is taken care of.

This is partly what we mean when we pray "lead us not into temptation." We recognize that Christ was tempted in our place and won that victory for us.

Jesus was also obedient to the Father. We see that very clearly here, obedient in being baptized, obedient in fasting forty days in the wilderness, obedient in doing the Father's will in all things .

Yes the spirit drove Him, but Jesus went willingly. This is what we call His active obedience that He accepted the Father's will in his life, **even if he did not understand.**

It is easy to accept the Father's will when we understand, that does not involve faith, to accept His will when we don't understand that is faith.

Why be hungry for 40 days when you could easily make bread? Why go in to the wilderness at all, wouldn't it be better if he were out preaching?

Maybe Jesus knew and understood all these things, I don't know, but I do know there are many things that we know are God's will for us that we don't understand.

Even the very question we are talking. Why is there temptation? Why is there evil?

As I said Jesus was tempted in our place, but this doesn't mean there is no temptation in our life. Certainly we don't have to face the same level of temptation that Jesus did, certainly we know that when we fail, Jesus already passed the test for us. But nevertheless there is temptation in our life.

As Jesus said, "trials and tribulations must come." But why? Why was it necessary for Adam and Eve to be tempted by the fruit?

We could give some possible answers, but in the end those are just human speculation, the Bible hints at some things but it doesn't really tell us why. When Job asked this same question of God, God simply said, "Because I'm God and I know best."

So the question is, "are we going to follow?"

When we pray lead us not into temptation we are indeed asking that as He leads us God would lead us in a way that avoids temptation, but we are also acknowledging that if and when the way he leads us leads through temptation we will follow, even though we might not understand why it is necessary.

Here we have the example of Abraham. The story of Abraham sacrificing Isaac is not the story of man who faced a great test and succeeded, no, it is the story of a God who provided. As they walked up that mountain Isaac asked Abraham, "where is the sacrifice?" Abraham replied, "the Lord will provide." "And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, 'In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.'"

And so two thousand years before Christ the Israelites had the witness of Abraham, that one day on that very mountain the Lord would provide a substitute sacrifice, a substitute not only for Isaac but for the entire world.

The Lord provided, the Lord provided a substitute, the Lord provided strength. The Lord provided strength to Abraham, the Lord provided strength to Jesus.

He prepared him through his baptism and with the words from heaven, "you are my beloved son." He sent the angels to give him strength.

This then is the third thing that we mean when we pray "Lead us not into temptation." That "even though we are tempted by them, we ask that we would win in the end and keep the victory." In other words that God would give us strength.

The hymn for today is, "A mighty fortress is our God." What a perfect hymn, that in the day of trial, the day of tribulation, the day of evil, God would keep us safe by his power and strength.

So when we pray lead us not into temptation, we are praying:

1. God would lead us in a way that avoids temptation
2. When it is necessary he would keep us safe and give us the strength to persevere
3. Most importantly, Christ has already faced all temptations for us and has already won, so that even though we may still have some trials in Him we have already won.