

# A More Opportune Time

Text: Luke 4:13 INI Lent 1 Wayzata 2/21/2010

Some people do not believe Satan is real. Others believe Satan is too real. Fiction operates on the premise that Satan is as real and use special effects to scare people even more. When fiction tries to depict Satan they make a two-fold mistake. The first is that good and evil are equal forces. They are not. The second is that precisely performing some prescribed ritual is the only way to defeat Satan. If not done precisely it will fail and Satan will triumph. Wrong again.

God is behind good and He is infinitely more powerful than Satan. Secondly if Satan could be defeated by ritual exactly performed then the doctrine of grace and forgiveness in Jesus Christ are ineffectual. It would mean that people could defeat Satan simply by living the kind of ritual life that defeats him and brings good into the world.

The basic mistake of all work-righteous people whether they are legalist Christians or pagans. God sent His son Jesus to defeat Satan. Jesus had to go the way of the cross to do that. Satan wanted to sidetrack Jesus from His mission and purpose. What we are going to look at this morning is an encounter Jesus had with Satan, but it wasn't the only one (TEXT).

Luke tells us Jesus was tempted through all the forty days in the wilderness. The three tests recorded here may seem different from each other. But really they have the same purpose to keep Jesus from fulfilling His Messianic role. All through Jesus' ministry there were times when people questioned Jesus or make Him King. Each attempt was to keep Him from the cross.

When the encounter recorded here took place Jesus had been forty days in the wilderness after His baptism. He hadn't eaten in those forty days. There is a parallel to the Old Testament. Temptation in the wilderness worked. God's people spent forty years in the wilderness wandering around. There was a time they had no food either and complained the God brought them out there to die. And after a while even the manna the bread God provided wasn't good enough.

Jesus first temptation had to do with food. Satan cannot read human minds but he does know human weaknesses. Notice that Jesus and Satan agree on three main points. Jesus is the Messiah. Satan has lordship over this earth for a time. Scripture has authority and reveals God's will.

The temptation wasn't just to make rocks into bread but for Jesus to use His Son ship to alleviate His own physical need. That isn't wrong in itself. It certainly would be within Jesus power. After all He would feed others on small portions. But it is not in the role of the Son of God to feed Himself. Jesus is a man for others. But the real temptation is the ever present one to put material things before spiritual things.

We have the same temptations. That is to put things of this world ahead of things of God. Like put work ahead of prayer, a family's social life ahead of a devotional life, TV comes ahead of worship, leisure ahead of service, use our resources only for ourselves. We have all fallen into those traps of Satan.

Jesus doesn't jump to a long and drawn out defense of why He knows He is the Son of God. Nor does He pull rank on Satan. Each of which He could have done. Scripture has the answer.

When Israel received the Manna, the bread God provided for them, God warned them. "Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." It's an idea that Israel and we disregard with some frequency. But Jesus was right. He would overcome this temptation with God's Word and our sin of trying to live by bread alone by His death and resurrection.

The next test Satan puts to Jesus has a ring of truth to it. Right now, Satan implies, the world belongs to me. I can give your Messiah-ship the proper send off. Just worship me and I will give you all the kingdoms I have with no opposition.

Satan offers Jesus a physical and political reign. Satan could arrange that without too much trouble. At the time, most pious Jews looked for the Messiah to establish a physical and political kingdom.

The temptation is similar for us. We look around and see all the worldly having so much fun, getting ahead in life, using their means for themselves, not worrying at all about guilt or shame. Why not join them in a way. Give lip service to God and do whatever we want to any way. Many people do that you know. Carnal Christians they are called. But it's a misnomer.

Jesus doesn't argue with Satan. The power Satan has over the world is only because God who really owns it allows it to him temporarily. Nor does he pull rank again and say, "I am God, you worship me."

No Jesus digs back into the Bible for the answer. He gives the second half of the Hebrew Creed. God gave them their statement of belief. He knew they would be faced with worshipping the false gods of the Canaanites when they got to the Promised Land. The worship of these other gods would look like so much fun other than how God wanted them to worship Him. See a parallel there in temptation for us to succumb to entertainment worship?

Israel's creed goes, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one. Worship the Lord your God only and serve only Him." It's not lip service to one and live for another. We would do well to follow this one since we live in such a double-minded world. But Jesus would die by the hands of those whose hearts were not with God. His death would be so you and I could be the children of God.

Now on the pinnacle of the temple Satan wants Jesus to test His Sonship by diving into the middle of the market place. If God saves Him what a name He makes for Himself. Satan even quotes the bible to prove his point. But in doing so he forgets that God saves in the normal course of daily life. Are only the living blessed. Hardly, Jesus death would contradict that.

We are tempted by similar temptations that God cares for us even when we carelessly or recklessly put our lives in jeopardy. Some think God watches over me like He's some kind of rabbit's foot. There are people who play Russian roulette with their physical and spiritual lives. God will protect. Show you are really God and keep me alive

Jesus could argue that He is God's real Son. But He did not. Jesus quotes the Bible again. "Do not tempt the Lord." He will deliver and He did deliver in His own time and way.

Do not put God to the kind of test where you place your physical or spiritual life in danger just to see if He will rescue you. He certainly does not need to. The greatest rescue He did for us is when He left Jesus to die for our sins on Calvary's cross.

These temptations are just a preliminary round. Satan, Luke says, goes away for a more opportune time. It comes. People want to make Him a king after he feeds them. Peter doesn't want Him to go to Jerusalem to be crucified. Judas kisses Him and He could have left without anyone knowing where He went. Peter draws a sword and He could have called for angels. Do some miracle for Herod but He refused. Who hit you they asked and he knew but kept silent. Come down from the cross they said and He could have but didn't.

These three were part of many trials and tests He went through to try to get Him to fail to be the real Messiah. Jesus is tempted, we are told, in every way. Yet He uses what is common to every human being to overcome those temptations. He uses what is common to us. He uses God's Word. It is good reason to know God's Word to combat Satan's temptations. . It is good to know Jesus ultimate victory came on the cross and it is yours and it is mine because we fail. When we fail we are tempted to be despondent and depressed and thin God will not forgive. In Christ he does and will

We find that promise in the Sacrament of his body and blood for our forgiveness, strength and hope. Jesus is our hero in the fight against Satan. He equips us and stands by us. Amen.