

St. Peter Lutheran Church
February 22, 2026
Invocavit (First Sunday in Lent)
Matthew 4:1-11

Intro

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

In the Lord's Prayer, we pray, "And lead us not into temptation." And here in the Gospel we see the necessity of this petition, since God does indeed lead into periods of extreme testing, periods in which the devil, whose purpose is to destroy our faith, is used as a tool of God to refine our faith. So we pray that *God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory.*

We overcome the devil, the world, and our sinful nature in Jesus our Lord. Here Christ, having only just been anointed by the Spirit at His Baptism, is now led by the same Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Baptism is no child's play. Baptism makes one an enemy of the devil. In Baptism, God steals us away from the devil, taking back what rightfully belongs to him. Christians will have the devil against them their entire life through.

And Jesus, anointed by the Spirit at His Baptism, was now on His mission to plunder the devil's house. Jesus, baptized in the Jordan, now had a baptism to be baptized with—his heels would be bruised and pierced, his hands would be nailed through, but He would bruise the head of Satan, He would bind the strong man and plunder him, paying the just penalty of the sins of mankind, He would release us from the devil's hold and grant eternal life to all who believe. So every baptism angers the devil, every baptism takes a soul from his dark kingdom and transfer that soul to the kingdom of the beloved Son.

So following Jesus' baptism, the devil attempts to cut down this Shoot before it blossoms. He attempts to cause Jesus to fall just as he had originally done with Adam. This time, the devil enters not a beautiful garden, but a wilderness of hunger—the result of man's sin—and the devil wants to keep mankind in this world of toil, heartache, sin, and death. He does not want life restored to man, he does not want man to belong to God. So, after Jesus had **fasted forty days and forty nights** in the wilderness, and was hungry and weak, **the tempter came to Him**. However sly he thought himself, he was not, for the Spirit had led Jesus here for just this purpose, for just this confrontation. Our Lord had to contend with the devil and overcome him. Our Lord needed to be tempted in every way that we are, and yet remain without sin.

I.

Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” The devil shows his anger has been stirred against Jesus at the voice from heaven—**“This is my beloved Son.”** And the devil’s anger is stirred also against each of us baptized into Jesus and adopted as sons of God. So the devil tempts Jesus to not look to His Father in heaven to give him His food in due season. He tempts Jesus to receive something without thanksgiving to His Father in heaven. What seems like a basic survival miracle, turning stones into bread, would be mutiny against His Father.

But [Jesus] answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” Jesus recited the Scriptures concerning God’s provisions for Israel in the wilderness. The people had hungered and yet God fed them with bread from heaven. Jesus was the faithful Israel who waited on the LORD, trusting in His mercy, and would not turn the stones into bread.

II.

Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.’” In the second temptation, the devil takes the words of Scripture into his own cursed mouth. But these holy words are only abused by him, as he used them to deceive and tell lies in God’s name. We dare not assume that everyone who takes up the Word of God is a prophet of the LORD. We must **test the spirits, whether they are of God.**

The devil’s poison seeps in even where God’s Word is used, and sometimes God’s Word is abused to support the poison. Today, God’s Word is twisted by ministers of the Gospel to adopt the world’s acceptance of all manners of wickedness. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is mutilated into a gospel of social justice, a gospel of acceptance and affirmation for sin, a gospel of government social programs, a gospel that can be shared across all faiths. This gospel is a deception of the devil, a twisting of God’s Word, a dressing up of demons as angels of light.

So as the devil twisted the Scriptures, Jesus remained steadfast. The promises of God’s protection is no reason to act violently and dangerously any more than the promise of God’s forgiveness is reason to affirm sin. So **Jesus said to him, “It is written again, You shall not tempt the LORD your God.”**

III.

Finally, the devil took [Jesus] up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.” In exasperation, the devil finally shows his true colors. There is no more masking his intentions, but he lays it all bare. Worship me instead of

God. Trade eternal security for fleeting pleasure. Remain in the wilderness hungry forever instead of finding satisfaction in God.

The devil is the prince of this world. He does have things he can give you that are indeed pleasurable, especially for a time. But the devil's gifts are only curses in disguise. All his pleasures turn to pain, all his comfort turns to torment. For the same Christ who bound and plundered him by His death and resurrection, is coming soon as Judge. And then, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire. And all who belonged to him will go there too. **The cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murders, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. But he who overcomes shall inherit all things.**

So Jesus said to him, **“Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”** Then the devil left [Jesus], and behold, angels came and ministered to Him. Jesus overcame the assaults of the devil, Jesus was tempted in every way that we are and yet remained without sin. Jesus remained a faithful Son of His Father.

Conclusion

So Christ did what Adam failed to do, what we all fail to do, and continued on the journey begun at His baptism—he continued to His cross. Having overcome the devil's temptations, He goes on to accomplish His mission—to release the captives from the prison and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. He goes on as the sinless unblemished Lamb of God, the One who will lay down his life to set us free. The One who will defeat death by His death and resurrection.

The devil leaves Jesus for now, but will come against him again with all his hordes. But in the devil's final assault on Jesus, he will find he has no claim on Him. When Jesus hangs on the cross and dies, instead of Satan triumphing, he will find himself to be cast out. Christ, the sinless One, will die for our sins—the sins of the entire world—and by His resurrection, we are justified. Jesus has crushed the serpent's head, set us free from his captivity, destroyed death, and restored to us eternal life. Baptism joins you to Jesus in a death like His and promises you a resurrection like His. Christ has already overcome the devil, sin, and death, and we who are in Him, will overcome too. Our barren wasteland of sin and death will be replaced with a new heavens and a new earth. And until we reach the promised paradise, the land flowing with milk and honey, he gives manna for the journey, our daily bread in Jesus Christ. And as we pray, “Lead us not into temptation,” we also pray the certain outcome of our inheritance in Christ—“But deliver us from the evil one.”