

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

In Eden Adam had luxury. And in Eden, Adam fasted. That was part of the luxury. His worship was to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Before the fall into sin, there was fasting. Adam fasted, but he did not hunger. In Eden Adam was never in danger of death. What Adam had in Eden was better than all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. But still he chose to sin.

So when Christ, the Last Adam came, the devil strove to make Him fall. By deceit, the devil tried to outdo the paradisiacal luxury God created. With lies the devil tried to portray a better Eden. Temptation worked on the first Adam. So now the devil multiplies the temptation. It is a full-on attack. His gloves are off.

First he offers bread that he cannot provide. Then he tempts the God Man to cheat death. And then he offers him wealth and honor and glory that isn't his to give. He tempts by going for the weaknesses of the flesh and of the heart. He fishes for pride. He tempts by lying. For he is a murderer and a liar, and he has been since he enticed the first Adam.

After a 40 day fast, the Lord is hungry. The devil tempts the Christ to use His Divine Powers to perform a miracle. The Pharisees and Herod will do the same, for their own amusement. But Divine Power is not so cheaply spent. The pinnacle of the Temple is the high point, which would place the Christ to tower over the Law and the Prophets, over the Divine Service of God. The temptation was a trick, for the Christ was already over the Law and the Prophets. He was the Center and Giver of the Divine Service. But His death would not be such an easy one.

The devil succeeded in bringing Adam from high to low, from Eden to the land of toil and sweat and thorns and thistles and death. So he bids the Christ to cheat death, to throw Himself from high to low, to test the Scriptures to see if they are true, which is to test God, which is unbelief.

And then the devil offers the Christ a lower glory than is already His – a tentative, conditional glory. For glory that can be given can be taken away. Neither is true of the Glory of God. But in truth, the real attack of the devil is not in bread or in pinnacles or in feigned glory. He mounts his spiritual attack though the weakness of the physical. The real attack is one with which he also attacks you.

The one who taunted “Did God really say...” now taunts “If you are the Son of God...”. That is the real temptation, the center of all unbelief – to doubt that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. For the one who doubts that cannot be saved. The one who doubts that is the devil's own.

So the first two attacks of the devil on the Incarnate Word were prefaced with “If you are the Son of God...” And the last attack is just as blasphemous as the first two. The devil bids Him worship him. That also is to deny who God is. And that is ultimately what the devil wants – to steal souls through false doctrine, errant worship, idolatry, which is to separate men from the only true God by lies and deceit.

The devil loves false doctrine. Nothing pleases the devil more than full churches on Sunday morning, full churches and full mosques and full synagogues and full kingdom halls where false doctrine is taught. False doctrine, wrong teaching about God and His Word, makes the devil's job easy.

False preachers are the devil's footsoldiers, whether they know it or not. For by false doctrine men are taught wrong things about God. By it men come to doubt or reject the clear teachings of the Holy Scriptures. By it men hear a word that cannot save, a word contrary to the Word of God. And deceived by false teaching, men are starved of the Word by which life comes. Then the devil's work is easy. He has his hooks in their flesh and in their hearts. They are, as Adam was, subjugated through consent.

And that is where you find your wilderness temptation. You find it when you separate yourself from the clear Truth of God's Word, and crave the very things God tells you will hurt you. That fruit has seemed to you too to be good for food, to be pleasurable to the eyes, to be desirable to make one wise. With each sin you have committed, you have repeated the error of the first Adam. But it is God that is proved true, not the tempter, and not the sinner. For the devil's promises are empty, but God's Word is true. In sin, you shall surely die.

The first Adam broke the fast. Not so the Last Adam. The Christ, God Enfleshed, withstood the temptation. He did not create miraculous bread to eat, rather He rebuked the devil with the Word of God, by which alone man lives. And in that Word there is life for you.

Adam ate and died. Christ did not eat – and still He died. But the death of the Last Adam was not like the death of the first. Christ alone has the power to defeat death. For in Adam all die, but in Christ, all are made alive.

The true Son of Abraham, the Seed of Abraham, God's Only Begotten Son, bore the wood on His back as He carried it to the place of sacrifice - Golgotha. But no ram took His place. He was sacrificed on the altar of wood. And there, on the cross, God did what He had promised – He provided the Lamb, the Lamb of God, the Sinless, Perfect Lamb without blemish, who gave His own life as the once-for-all sacrifice for sin. He made His cross, the tree of His death, a tree of life for you.

In His temptation in the wilderness the Lord resists what you could not. But more, His sinless victory is for you an example of how to defeat temptation – by the Word of God. Where the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, the devil must flee. There is power in God's Word, power to repel evil, power to convert, power to save. And by that Word, by the sweet Truth of the Holy Gospel, by the Holy Spirit, God brings His salvation, His victory over sin, His victory over death, and His victory over the devil to you.

Believing, you know that you do not live by bread alone, although God provides you daily bread. You live by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God. You hunger for His Word. When His Word is taught and preached, you desire to hear and learn it. In sanctification, you do not tempt the Lord your God, rather you strive in faith to please Him, to do the very things that

are in accord with His good and gracious will. And you worship the Lord your God, and Him only do you serve. Because that is what His Word teaches, and that is what faith does.

“Abraham called the name of the place ‘The Lord Will Provide’, for as it is said, ‘In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.’” God is faithful to His Promise. This day it is provided for you on the mountain of this altar. Here the Word by which you live is proclaimed.

And here God provides the Lamb. Here God gives you to eat of the Body of His Only Son, the Fruit of the Cross, Christ, the Lamb of God. Here God gives you to drink of the Blood shed for you for the remission of your sins. You eat and drink, and “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” And the holy angels minister to you.

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