

## Sermon for March 9, 2025 – Lent 1

Mark 1:12-15 EHV

Theme: **Jesus lived...**

- 1) To defeat the Devil.
- 2) To proclaim salvation.

*<sup>12</sup>The Spirit immediately sent Jesus out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup>He was in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels were serving him.*

*<sup>14</sup>After John was put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. <sup>15</sup>“The time is fulfilled,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near! Repent, and believe in the gospel.”*

How did Jesus save you? I mean, if someone asked you how you know you’ll go to heaven when you die, you’d likely say, “Because Jesus died for my sins on the cross.” While that’s true, it’s only half the answer. Before Jesus could die for you, he had to live for you—not just as an example, but as your substitute, earning the righteousness you need to be reconciled to God. Let us consider these things under the theme: **Jesus lived...** 1) To defeat the Devil 2) To proclaim salvation.

Part One: To defeat the Devil.

Before we delve into our sermon text, I want to explain why it’s so short compared to our Gospel lesson for this morning, even though it describes the same event.<sup>i</sup> Mark’s Gospel was written for non-Jews with a simple purpose: to show that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.<sup>ii</sup> Therefore, Mark does not spend a long time explaining things; he gets straight to the point. You could say he’s the kind of writer you wish your pastor would be—short and to the point.

So, while the other Gospel writers detailed how the devil tempted Jesus, Mark simply states that he was tempted. Why does Mark do this? To help us better understand how Jesus saved us.

Our sermon text occurred immediately after Jesus’ baptism. Mark writes: *<sup>12</sup>The Spirit immediately sent Jesus out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup>He was in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels were serving him.*

The word “Christ” means “the anointed one.” At Jesus’ baptism, God the Father publicly anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit, inaugurating Him into His public ministry. And what was the first act the Holy Spirit compelled Jesus to do after God the Father publicly proclaimed Him to be His Son? To be alone in the wilderness – fasting for forty days to give Satan ample time and opportunity to tempt Him.

Even though the other Gospel writers only mention three temptations, don’t assume that those were the only ones Jesus encountered. Satan persistently tempted Jesus throughout his 40-day

stay in the wilderness.<sup>iii</sup> And, as the last verse of our Gospel lesson from Luke states: “*When the Devil had finished every temptation, he left him until an opportune time.*”<sup>iv</sup>

Yes, just as the devil tempts you throughout your life, he also tempted Jesus throughout His. And what a source of comfort that is to know. Why? Because, as this morning’s epistle lesson emphasizes: *we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin.*<sup>v</sup> Consider what that means as you think about how the devil tempts you to pride, anger, lust, selfishness, and all kinds of other sins. Jesus faced those same temptations also, with one exception: he didn’t succumb to sin.

We may wonder: “If Jesus was tempted his whole life, why does the Bible place special attention on the three temptations Jesus endured at the end of His 40 days in the wilderness?” I believe they serve to highlight Jesus’ perfect trust in God’s Word on our behalf. Despite being particularly vulnerable, isolated, and in dire need of divine assistance, He nevertheless overcame every temptation the devil hurled at Him by properly applying God’s Word. In doing so, Jesus “passed the test” that we fail every day: He demonstrated perfect faith in God and His Word. He did that for us.

Let me explain what I mean with an analogy: Imagine you were in school and given a test that you knew you were going to fail. Despite your best efforts, you could not even get one question right. Now, imagine your brilliant friend notices your predicament, so he puts your name on his test and gives it to you. Then, He takes your test and puts his name on it and hands it to the teacher. Who will get punished for the bad test? Your friend. What about you? You get to enjoy the benefit of your friend’s love: the perfect test upon which he put your name.

How does that analogy relate to Jesus overcoming Satan’s temptations for us? We all have broken God’s Law in countless ways, revealing that we are unrighteous. Jesus, however, perfectly kept God’s Law, revealing that He is righteous. Through faith, God applies Jesus’ record of keeping God’s law to our account.<sup>vi</sup>

Just think: God holds a perfect test with your name on it! When God looks at you, He sees no sin. Even if you were the most sinful person in the world, your record is spotless before Him.<sup>vii</sup> Why? Because you are covered with Jesus’ record of righteousness through faith in Him. Yes, Jesus didn’t just die for you, he also *lived* for you: He perfectly overcame every temptation the devil threw at Him to break God’s law so that, through faith, His perfect record of keeping God’s law might become your perfect record of keeping God’s law.

But that’s not the only thing Jesus lived to do. He also lived to let people know about God’s plan to save them. He lived to proclaim God’s salvation.

## Part Two: To proclaim salvation

Almost an entire year elapsed between Jesus’ time in the wilderness and John’s imprisonment. The other Gospels document Jesus’ preaching activity during that period. Mark’s Gospel,

however, focuses our attention on the main objective of Jesus' ministry during that time: to proclaim God's good news of salvation.

We read: <sup>14</sup>*After John was put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.* <sup>15</sup>*"The time is fulfilled," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near! Repent, and believe in the gospel."*

Understand Jesus' words correctly. He was not saying that the end of the world was at hand. Instead, he was announcing the arrival of God's gracious rule in the hearts and lives of believers, for that is what His Kingdom is. As God the Father proclaimed at His Baptism, Jesus was the Christ - His chosen servant who would reveal the truth about God's profound love for fallen humanity: that *God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*<sup>viii</sup>

Jesus preached: *Repent and believe in the gospel.* That means turn away from your sins by confessing them to God and believe the good news that He will forgive them all for Jesus' sake. He paid for all your sins when He died on the cross. His resurrection proves it. Not only that, but He clothes you with His righteousness through faith to such a degree that when God the Father looks at you, He sees Jesus. Clinging to this truth, live in the peace of God's forgiveness by living for Jesus as He lived for you.

That brings me to one last point I want to make about Jesus living for us: just as Jesus lived to defeat the devil for us in the past, He lives today to help us overcome the temptations the devil throws our way. How does Jesus do that? Through the Gospel encouragement of faithful pastors and Christian friends.

Let me explain what I mean. You may be going through a difficult time in your life, feeling like no one understands you. You might even imagine as God being so distant and holy that you feel too ashamed to seek His help. Let me assure you, these things you feel are not the truth.

This is what Jesus wants you to know about him: He is not far away; He is here with you, just as he promised his disciples before His ascension. *"Surely I am with you always until the end of the age."*<sup>ix</sup> Jesus also wants you to know that He understands what it feels like to be alone and assaulted by the devil. He knows what it means to be the target of everyone's mockery and have friends disown or betray you for no good reason. Jesus knows how hard it is to do good in the face of evil and to forgive someone who has long passed the human boundaries of deserving our forgiveness. He understands how you feel when a flood of overwhelming temptation hits you out of nowhere. He sympathizes with you in all of this because every bitter and difficult thing we experience in life, He experienced as well. Through it all, He remained sinless for you, defeating the devil at every turn to win your salvation.

And Jesus wants to help you defeat the devil in your temptations as well. How? First and foremost, He wants you to trust that, because of His work, you are already reconciled to God. Yes, regardless of how much the devil tries to convince you otherwise, you are already forgiven and at peace with God through faith in Jesus.

In the peace of that forgiveness, Jesus wants you to listen to the faithful Christians He put in your life to proclaim His Good News. Whenever they faithfully guide you in His Word, you can be certain that Jesus himself is counseling you through them. How so? Because they are using His Words just like He commanded. When they call you to repentance, understand that Jesus himself is calling you through them. When they tell you that you are forgiven for Jesus' sake, know that Jesus himself is proclaiming that truth from heaven through them. In their handshakes and heartfelt hugs, feel Jesus' embrace because they are simply acting at Jesus' command, fulfilling His ministry as the Spirit works through their witness of His Word.

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, rejoice that Jesus lives for you! Through your Saviour's perfect victory over the devil's temptations, Jesus won for you the righteousness you need to stand before God. He lives to clothe you in that righteousness now as you repent and believe the Good News of what He has done for you, all to the glory of His name. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Luke 4:1-13

<sup>ii</sup> Cf. Mark 1:1

<sup>iii</sup> Cf. Luke 4:2

<sup>iv</sup> Luke 4:13 EHV

<sup>v</sup> Hebrews 4:15 EHV

<sup>vi</sup> Cf. Romans 4

<sup>vii</sup> Cf. 1 Timothy 1:15-16

<sup>viii</sup> John 3:16 EHV

<sup>ix</sup> Matthew 28:20 EHV