

**Luke 4:1-13** Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, <sup>2</sup> being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. <sup>3</sup> And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." <sup>4</sup> But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'" <sup>5</sup> Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. <sup>6</sup> And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. <sup>7</sup> "Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours." <sup>8</sup> And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" <sup>9</sup> Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. <sup>10</sup> "For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,' <sup>11</sup> "and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" <sup>12</sup> And Jesus answered and said to him, "It has been said, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'" <sup>13</sup> Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

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Jesus today in our Gospel reading for the day defeats the devil with three simple words: It is written. How could such simple words defeat one as crafty and wise as the devil? How could these three words sustain a man against the temptations of the flesh? And could it be that simple for us? Can we defeat the devil with three simple words when he seeks to drag us into sin?

Our Gospel text tells us that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert shortly after His baptism. For forty days and nights, He was tempted by the devil. And all this time, He never even stopped to eat. And after forty days, it set in. Jesus was human and as a human He was very hungry. Satan, being as wise as he is, decided to hit Jesus right at His point of weakness. The devil posed a very simple question to Jesus. If He was really the Son of God, why stand around being hungry? Surely the Son of God could make bread out of stones and be satisfied. But Jesus knew that His life was about much more than eating and being satisfied. So He spoke three words to the devil. It is written. It is written that man does not live by bread alone. Man needs much more than just bread to live, He needs God to live. Jesus quoted the word of God to the devil and silenced his temptation.

But Satan was not yet done, if hunger for food would not work, perhaps hunger for power would. So Satan took Jesus up to a mountain where He could see all the kingdoms of the world at once. And then He

made a suggestion. He told Jesus that all of the world could be His if He just fell to his knees and worshipped Satan. He tempted Jesus by offering Him all that Jesus would someday receive anyway. But Satan offered it to Him now. No whipping, no mocking, no cross was necessary. All of it could be His with one simple act of worship. And while all that power might have been enticing, Jesus responded with three words. It is written. It is written that God and God alone is worthy of our worship. Jesus quoted the word of God to the devil and silenced his temptation.

The devil then loaded up for one final try to make Jesus question who He was. He took Jesus up to the top of the temple and told him to jump. If He really was the Son of God, surely God would take care of him. After all, tempted Satan, it was written. It was written that God's angels would protect Him if he jumped. The devil quoted the Word of God to Jesus in an effort to defeat Him. And how did Jesus respond? You guessed it. It is written. It is written that we are not to tempt the Lord our God. Jesus quoted the word of God to the devil and silenced his temptation.

Thankfully for us, Jesus, although being tempted stood firm to every attack the devil threw at Him. And because He remained without blemish, without sin, He remained the perfect sacrifice for all of our sins. Since He had no sins of His own, He could carry ours all the way to the cross. And that He did. He died for all the times when we have given into the temptations which Satan threw our way. We rejoice today in Jesus' victory over Satan in the desert knowing that is the beginning of the victory sealed at the cross and empty tomb and to be brought to fulfillment on the last day.

And beyond our rejoicing at Jesus victory today, we also learn how to have the same victory over Satan. In your baptism the victory that Jesus won over Satan was given to you. As Paul says, we now are more than conquerors through Jesus. By watching Jesus closely we can understand how to fight temptation. How are we to fight when Satan catches us at our weakest point and tempts us with the things we desire most? Three words, "It is written." We too quote the word of God to the devil and silence his temptation.

We remind Satan that Jesus' victory is our victory because we died in baptism with Jesus and now walk in newness of life with Him. We tell him that we are no longer bound to sin, but rather free to serve God. We tell him that we are new creations, the old has gone and the new has come. We don't tell him this because it

sounds good, we tell him this because it is written. It is written in God's word. It is the truth that God himself proclaims about us His children. We simply remind Satan who we are in Christ.

There are two main things that can get in the way of us fighting temptation this way. The first is not knowing and meditating upon the promises of God. We live in an age that has the easiest access to the word of God ever known and often at the same time live in a culture that has the least knowledge of that word. The Bible is on our shelves, it is on our computers, it is on cassette tape and compact disc, and yet, we often find ourselves not delving into it at all. The word is all around us and yet not in us. Too often, we think that we know enough about the Bible and about God, that there is no need to read the Bible at home, no need to study it at church. And then temptation comes, and before we can even recall the promises of God which can make us to stand firm, we have fallen yet again. We realize in the face of temptation that being in God's Word is essential to the fight.

The other thing that can cause us to fall quickly into temptation is this: knowing the promises of God, but not believing them. Some sins in our life seem so much a part of who we are. We listen to what our society and our psychologists tell us rather than listening to the word of God. We believe that we are bound to be angry because we had a bad upbringing. We believe that men are simply supposed to be lust-filled creatures. We believe that as teenagers, we must be rebellious against their parents. Society tells us that we simply have no choice. These sins, they tell us, are hard-wired in.

Each of us has those sins that we just let stay in our life figuring they are just part of who we are. But my dear Christian friends, it is not who you are, you were washed, but you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. And you now have his victory over Satan, our flesh, and this world. Because of Jesus, we too can stand firm as Satan begins to attack us. We simply need remind ourselves and then Satan. It is written. And if God has written it, it is true. We remind Satan and he flees.

Indeed there will be times when we forget or do not trust what God has written, and we will fall. And for those times, we rejoice again that we have that perfect sacrifice Jesus to cover our sins. We rejoice that Jesus stood perfectly for those times that we do not. And that is where our true comfort remains. Jesus has

made it possible for us to stand against the attacks of the devil and to fall on him when we don't. And that is good news indeed. Amen.