

## **Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family**

### **Title: Temptation of the World**

#### **Lesson: Luke 4:1-13**

*4 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, <sup>2</sup> where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. <sup>3</sup> The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” <sup>4</sup> Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’”*

*<sup>5</sup> Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup> And the devil said to him, “To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. <sup>7</sup> If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” <sup>8</sup> Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’” <sup>9</sup> Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, <sup>10</sup> for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’ <sup>11</sup> and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’” <sup>12</sup> Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” <sup>13</sup> When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.*

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.

Today is the first Sunday in Lent. Lent began from Ash Wednesday and lasts until the day before Easter Sunday. One of the things Methodists believe in is sanctification. God loves us even before we were born and we knew it, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can realize our human sinful nature and repent and accept Christ. But it is not the end because we must continue to pursue holiness and move toward it. In other words, our journey of faith is sanctification, and it is a lifelong journey to holiness. And, we progressively move forward to holiness through the process of confession and absolution. So, Lent is not just forty days, but it is a special forty days that we can focus on God and our relationship with him and confess our sins, and remember the suffering of Christ on earth and prepare for His resurrection. And, these forty days is almost one-tenth of a year, so it is also called the season of the tithe of our faith. I believe this journey of forty days will be the foundation of a healthy faith that gives your life energy and vitality.

Forty days. When we read the Bible, we find the number forty several times here and there. I've found six forty days in the Bible.

- 1) The period of urging for the destruction and repentance of the city, Nineveh, was 40 days (Jonah3:4);
- 2) Jesus was tested by the devil in the wilderness after 40 days of fasting (Matthew4:2);
- 3) Strengthened by food and water, Elijah traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God (1Kings19:8);
- 4) Moses wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant for forty days (Exod34:28);
- 5) Twelve leaders sent by Moses traveled for forty days (Num13:25);
- 6) Jesus appeared to His disciples for forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God after His resurrection (Acts1:3).

Simply put: the forty days of Jonah means repentance; the forty days of Jesus in the wilderness means training; the forty days of Elijah means recovery; the forty days of Moses means preparation; the forty days after the resurrection of Christ means joy. We need a purpose to make these forty days more special and meaningful. I hope you choose one of the themes and design your Lent, and train your faith.

The Gospel reading for today is about the temptation of Jesus. Through today's lesson, let's find out how Jesus spent his forty days, how he overcame the temptations of Satan, and how we should spend this Lent.

According to today's text, Jesus, who was baptized by John the Baptist, left the people and went into the desert. To be exact, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert, and the purpose He went there was for training. For the people of Israel, the desert was the training site of God.

Jesus fasted and prayed for forty days in the desert for training. When Jesus felt hungry because of fasting, Satan came up to Him and whispered, "If you are the Son of God..." Satan's saying is slyly based on the premise that it may not be the truth. Satan's three temptations were things that any human being could easily fall for because everybody yearns for them.

The first temptation was that "if you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread (3)." The second temptation was that "If you, then, will worship me, all the glory and the authority of the world will all be yours. (7)."

And Satan's last temptation was that "if you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here (9)."

Satan's test moves from the desert to the highest point of the temple and to a very high mountain. Satan's temptations are not much different from the things that people of the world follow like money, power, honor and so on. Likewise, Satan was seducing Jesus with the things of the world.

The first temptation is about food, clothing, and shelter. The biggest temptation for fasters is the smell of food. If you have ever fasted, you can easily sympathize with the mind of fasters. I have an experience about the fast prayer. FYI: the fast prayer I'm saying is praying all day without eating anything except water and salt. When my fast prayer lasted for three days, I felt all my energy disappear, and the thought about food kept coming to my brain, and I wanted to eat anything. The second one is about honor and fame. Almost everyone wants to be famous and respected by people. The last one is about faith. It may be hard to reject the opportunity to get all things in the world by bowing down and worshiping Satan. The three things Satan suggested are what most people, including us, want, and are difficult to refuse when someone tells us they will give them to us.

However, how did Jesus answer to these temptations? When Satan said to him, "if you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread," Jesus said "Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God (4)," When Satan said, "I will give you all the glory and the authority if you worship me," (6-7) Jesus said, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." (8) And, finally, when Satan said "if you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here," (9) Jesus said, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." (12)

Jesus never compromised with Satan, nor did he walk the path of the wicked. Rather, he overcame all Satan's temptations. God is good, God is love, and God is perfect, but we are not. We are vulnerable to temptations, vulnerable to sin, and feel fear about an uncertain future.

When God created the world and made the first man and woman, God commanded them not to eat the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, but they were seduced by the snake and disobeyed the word of God and ate the fruit. As a result humans could no longer live in God's garden. When the Hebrews were suffering as slaves in Egypt, God heard their prayers and weeping, and sent Moses. He led them out of Egypt. However, the journey to Canaan was more difficult and hungry than they imagined. So they began their complaints on God and Moses.

God loves us, but we are too vulnerable to sin and to Satan's temptations. The story of Satan's temptations is not just a story in the Bible. It is the living word of God that applies to all of us.

Satan still works today. Satan constantly lies to us. Satan constantly interferes with our relationship with God. Satan constantly tells us that money is the most important thing in the world, and we cannot live without it. Satan constantly tells us that we need to be recognized and respected. Satan constantly tells us that we must be the number one even if we deceive and exploit others. Satan constantly whispers lies to entice us and lead us into sin in order to get us out of our relationship with God.

There are too many of Satan's temptations in our lives. If you don't have time to pray because you have to do Facebook, then Facebook is Satan's temptation. If you don't have time to read the Bible because you have to watch Netflix or TV, then the social medias are the Satan's temptation. If you don't have time to build up the relationship with God because you are too busy or too tired, then all the things that bother your relationship with God are Satan's temptation.

What we have to remember and what we have to hold onto until the day we return to God is only God. Beloved: the most important thing in the world is God and the relationship with Him.

This special forty days are not just forty days, but an important opportunity to focus on God and our relationship with God. This special forty days are not just forty days, but a precious opportunity to confess our weakness and our sinfulness to God and seek to embrace and reflect God's holiness intensively. These forty days are very special so I hope you take this special opportunity for yourselves and for God, and for your relationship with Him.

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison. Amen.