

It is Written  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent  
Luke 4. 1-13

Pastor Kelly K. Faulstich  
Grace Lutheran Church  
February 21, 2010

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It is written. These are the three words that both Jesus and the devil use in our gospel text this morning: it is written.

It is written, Jesus says, that one does not live by bread alone. Immediately after his baptism, Jesus is full of the Holy Spirit and led by this same Spirit into the wilderness. Jesus eats nothing for forty days and the devil tempts him to turn a stone into a loaf of bread. It would be nourishment for his weakened body. It would be energy for the very beginning of his journey into public ministry.

But it is written, Jesus resists the devil, resists temptation with these words from the book of Deuteronomy. And while he states only a portion of the passage here in Luke, we know how it ends: “one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 8.3). So, it is written.

The devil ups the ante and presents all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for Jesus’ worship of him. I will give you glory, the devil tempts. I will give you authority, the sales pitch is strengthened. It will be all yours, the devil attempts to seal the deal.

But, it is written, Jesus says. It is written, Jesus resists the devil turning again to words from the book of Deuteronomy: “The Lord your God you shall fear; him you shall serve, and by his name alone you shall swear” (Deuteronomy 6.13). Jesus says it a little differently though: “Worship the Lord our God and serve only him.”

In the devil’s third attempt to tempt Jesus, he draws from the same Psalm we do today, Psalm 91. It is written, says the devil, that God’s angels will protect you and bear you up so that you won’t strike your foot against a stone.

Jesus rebuttal again comes from Deuteronomy: “Do not put the Lord your God to the test” (6.16). And for the third time, Jesus resists the devil’s temptation. It is written as such in Luke’s gospel.

Jesus is strong even in his weakness. Jesus is led by the Spirit and not by the one who tempts. Jesus holds on long enough that the devil departs from him. And so, a simple conclusion here could be that Jesus is model for how we live out our faith.

\*\*\*

Last Sunday, we celebrated the Transfiguration of our Lord, the Transfiguration of Jesus, and this week we hit rewind on Luke’s gospel and back up to the beginnings of Jesus’ lordly career. We’ve gone from festival celebration with banners to nothing hanging in our worship space and the very recent memory of the

smudging of ashes on our foreheads. We've gone from the mountaintop glory where we saw Jesus' face shine to the wilderness where we might imagine sunken cheeks and grumbling belly.

It is Lent. And so we embark on a journey as well. This season of Lent is a tricky one, depending on how we observe it. For some, this liturgical season is more about preparing for baptism or about the reflection on or strengthening of one's own baptismal identity. Indeed, for a first-grader and an eighth-grader in our community here at Grace, this year Lent is about their preparation for baptism at the Easter Vigil.

For others, Lent is *the* season of penitence, the season during which we omit certain words beginning with the letter A from our worship, the season when we fast and give alms and pray more or differently. For some, Lent is a time of discipline when they give up or add in something to help them focus more on God.

Both approaches have their place in history and importance in the present. We take time to reflect or prepare for baptism. We challenge ourselves in faithful discipline and prayer. We ground ourselves in the gospel and witness of scripture.

This gospel text for the first Sunday in Lent is always this Jesus in the wilderness one. Although we cycle through the different gospel writers' accounts, it's always the same story. Jesus is tempted by the devil and comes out victorious. The simple conclusion here that "Jesus is model for how we live out our lives as followers of Christ" just doesn't do the whole thing justice.

It's a nice conclusion, sure. It's an earnest and honest conclusion, sure. We encounter temptations in many shapes and sizes, and sometimes we don't triumph as Jesus did. But if Jesus is just model for how we live our lives, we're omitting a crucial and very important part of the narrative.

\*\*\*

Have you ever sat down with a calendar and tried to count out the forty days of Lent? If you start with Ash Wednesday and continue with no breaks, you'd come up short of Easter Eve. Last week in Sunday School, the children made paper chains to count out the days of Lent and to correspond with a devotional book for their families to use during this season. But they had to use more than forty links in their chains. Why? Because Sundays aren't counted in the forty days of Lent.

Every Sunday, regardless of liturgical season, is a joyful celebration. This is because our faith in Jesus, our following of Christ, is about more than modeling our lives after what Jesus did in that desert wilderness with the devil.

Every Sunday, even in Lent, is a celebration of Jesus' resurrection. We recall his journey from the wilderness through his ministry, all the way up to and including the cross and triumph over death. Jesus isn't just a good guy who we should try to be like. Jesus is God's Word made flesh.

"It is written" are the three words used by both Jesus and the devil in the wilderness, and the good news for us this morning comes in that Jesus, God's Word (with a capital W) has been written victoriously over sin and over death. God's Word *is* strong. God's Word resists temptation. God's Word, Jesus, is a model for how we live and most importantly, God's Word is triumphant on the cross.

It is written that one does not live by bread alone. It is written that we serve God and none other. It is written, God's love and God's redemption are written in Jesus the Word, who calls us at the font and feeds us in the meal. It is written indeed.

To the glory of God.