

## Nothing to Prove

Luke 4:1-13

The First Sunday in Lent, February 14, 2016

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Some of the worst sins that we commit are committed when we are trying to prove ourselves. Some of the worst sins that we commit are the ones that we committed when we were young and we were trying to prove ourselves. We did bold things. We did things that we thought that no one else had done or tried. We did things in defiance of others just to prove to ourselves and to God that we could do them. We said things that we figured that no one else had said in order to be the first person to say them. We said them in defiance of those around us just to prove that we could say them. And once we had said or done them we realized that not only others said and done them before us, but that we had fallen guilty of not loving our neighbors as ourselves because we hurt others by our words or deeds.

If only we had stopped to consider our actions before we did them. If only we had stopped to consider our words before we spoke them. Maybe we would have thought them through in the light of God's word. Maybe we would have thought them through in light of common sense. Maybe we would have considered how other people would have received our actions. Maybe we would have considered how other people would hear our words. But we were so hell bound determined to prove ourselves that all we could see was our own power at stake. All we could see was the goals that we had set. All we could see was the potential glory that we would receive if only we could show the world of what we were made. Maybe if we had stopped to consider what we were about to do or say to prove ourselves we would have found out that others had said and done the same things before us. And not only would we have been humbled by realizing that we were doing nothing new or magnificent, but we would also have been able to consider the outcome for them of what they did and said, and maybe, just maybe we would have reconsidered trying to prove ourselves.

But that is the problem with temptation. When we are trying to prove ourselves all we think about is ourselves. We do not consider others. We do not consider God. Sin is the inevitable result. When we have made the mighty speech and done the mighty deed that we thought would have shown the world and God of what we were made, we injure others. We sin against God. And unfortunately we do demonstrate of what we are made: selfishness, with only a desire to prove oneself as motivation for what we did.

And I say that this can happen to the young. Actually it can happen to anyone no matter what their age, but especially to those who are trying something new.

And so our Lord is freshly baptized. The voice from heaven has proclaimed that He is God's Son. The Spirit guides Him into the wilderness as the first act of His public ministry. And the devil comes to Him to ask Him to prove Himself. "If You are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread."

Anyone of the children of Adam if they found themselves to be God in the flesh would have used their divine powers to prove themselves and would have immediately commanded the stones to become bread. We would have said in our hearts, "You don't think that I can do it, do you, devil? Well, I'll show you!" We would have commanded them to become bread. They would have become bread instantly. And as soon as they would have become bread we would have found ourselves obeying the devil and not God. We would have done it to prove ourselves.

But our Lord has been called the Son of God three times by now. Twice the angel Gabriel told His mother that the child to be born from her would be the Son of God. Once when He was twelve years old

He found Himself in the temple talking to the teachers there. It was the most natural thing to Him in the world. It was so natural that He had not returned to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph. After all, He had to be among His Father's things, right? He had to be in His Father's house, right? If He was the Son of God as the angel told His mother what more natural place for Him to be, but among His Father's things. And finally God Himself had told Jesus that Jesus was His Son. The voice from heaven at His baptism said, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased."

Three times the word of God declared Jesus to be God's Son. Once He Himself acknowledged it in His childhood and now Satan calls it all into question. If we had received such temptation we would have caved immediately because we would have felt the need to prove ourselves.

Jesus, on the other hand, actually believes what God tells Him. He believes that He is God's Son. He is under no compulsion to prove Himself. He does not believe Himself to be so important that He needs to prove Himself. That gives Him the power to think about the Scripture instead of about Himself. That gives Him a chance to think of the word of God rather than the insult with which the devil had insulted Him. It allowed Him a chance to think! And think He did and gave the devil His answer, "Man does not live on bread alone."

Some people have wondered how the devil could have shown Jesus all of the inhabited world and its glory and said to our Lord, "All this has been delivered over to me and I may give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if you will worship me, it will all be yours." What people have wondered about is how the devil could claim the entire inhabited world was his. Doesn't it belong to God?

In an ultimate sense it does belong to God. He made everything. The problem for us arose when God made us He said, "Let us make man in our image and after our likeness. Let them rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the beasts of the earth." When God said that, He gave mankind authority over the creation. He gave us authority over the entire world. And what did we do with our authority? We listened to the devil and by listening to the devil we had fellowship with him. We used our authority over the creation to carry out the devil's will. After all God had told us not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but would we listen to Him? No! We listened to the devil instead. We did the devil's will. And when we did the devil's will, we bowed down and worshipped him. Since the chief worship of God is to listen to His word when we flee from listening to him and listen to something else instead, whatever it is to which we listen is what we are worshipping. Since we listened to the devil, we worshipped him.

When we worshipped the devil we wound up doing his will instead of God's. Because we had authority over the creation by doing what the devil wanted us to do we, who had the authority of God over the world, were doing what the devil wanted us to do. By so doing we made the devil prince and lord over us and therefore turned over the entire creation to him.

This is why our Lord does not dispute the devil when the devil says that the world belongs to him. Our Lord could have argued with the devil that it all belongs to God. Our Lord does not do this which means that our Lord accepts the premise that the whole world belongs to the devil. Nowadays all you have to do is look at it to know that is true.

And why did we worship the devil to begin with? Ironically it was to be like God. That was the devil's temptation in the garden. He told Eve that God knows that when we eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that our eyes would be opened and that we would be like God. By saying that, the devil implied that we were not like God. But we were like God! We were made in His image! In spite of the fact that we were more like God than anything else in His creation we felt we had to prove ourselves and become like God by eating of the fruit of the tree that God explicitly told us not to eat.

What did we think we would gain by doing this? Did we think that we would become more like God than we already were? Did we forget that we were already like God and think that we had to prove ourselves in order to become like God. But that is the problem with listening to the devil, isn't it? When we listen to the devil even something that makes no sense whatsoever makes sense. Even though we were like God we felt we had to become like God because we listened to the devil. And because we listened to the devil we felt that we had to prove ourselves.

We did not think about God when we did this. We did not stop to consider our actions. We did not think about what God had said. We did not believe what God had said. If we had believed what God had said, we would have stood there dumbfounded at the foolishness of the devil. We would have stood there and wondered why the devil had told us that we would become like God if we ate the fruit of the tree. Didn't he know that we were already like God? Didn't the devil know that we had nothing to prove?

But we were not thinking at all. We listened to the devil. We did not think about God. We did not think about what He had said, much less believe it. We did not think about what the consequences of this action would be even though God had told us what it was.

And so we worshipped the devil. We bowed down before him. We prostrated ourselves before him and this world with its sin, sins, destruction, and death is the result. The only reason there is any goodness in it at all is because God will not allow His creation to be entirely run by the devil. He will preserve it for Himself.

But Jesus has nothing to prove. He has nothing to prove and therefore has the time to consider the obvious problem with what the devil is proposing. Jesus has nothing to prove and therefore is not beholden to this desperate need to do something spectacular in order to prove oneself. Our Lord knows that He is God's Son and that God will eventually deliver all of the creation into His hand. Our Lord knows and believes the obvious! And so He can stand there with the presence of mind to point out the obvious, "You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve."

That is why Jesus did not launch Himself off of the pinnacle of the temple. The devil tried to use the Scripture to get Jesus to prove Himself. After all the devil said, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning you,' and 'They will bear you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" The way that the devil has things set up is that unless Jesus throws Himself off of the temple, He will be telling God that He does not believe His promises in the Scriptures that the angels will come and save you. The devil now has a basis for accusing Jesus, "Don't you believe the Bible? Don't you believe God? If You do, throw Yourself down, or don't you believe in Him?"

Anyone of us humans would have thrown ourselves off of the temple immediately for fear that the whole world and the devil himself would see that we did not believe in God. We would have plummeted to our death because the reason that we threw ourselves off of the temple was in order to prove that we had faith. But if we think that we have to prove that we have faith, then we think that we have something to prove before God. If we think that we have something to prove before God, then we do not believe that we are justified by God by His grace. We think we have to do something to prove ourselves. We would have thrown ourselves off of the temple and we would have plummeted to our death. And God would have let us die in our ignorance and sin.

Jesus knows that He has nothing to prove. He knows that He believes in God. He knows what God has told Him. He knows that He is God's Son. God has told Him so. He doesn't have to prove it to anyone much less the devil. And so Jesus has the presence of mind to think about what God has said.

Jesus pauses on the temple long enough to consider His situation before the devil and everything that the Scripture says. He pauses long enough to realize that you should not put the Lord your God to the test.

Now, obviously Jesus is better than we are at facing temptation. Obviously the book of Hebrews was right that our Lord was tempted in every way, even as we are, and was without sin. But the point of beating the devil where humanity failed was to take humanity's place under temptation. Our Lord is here taking your place in battle against the devil and Jesus defeats him.

Now that Jesus has defeated the devil no temptation can harm you. The tempter has no power over you. Jesus has defeated the devil and the devil now has no basis to accuse you of your sins either. The blood of Jesus is the power by which those who follow in the testimony of Jesus overcome the devil. He cannot accuse you and point out all of your faults. God has declared with a voice from heaven that your sins are all forgiven. If your sins are all forgiven then you have nothing to prove.

Some of the worst sins that we human beings commit are the sins that we commit while we are trying to make up for the sins that we committed previously. Some of us would not have gotten into trouble for our sins had we not tried to make up for them because no one would have known what our sins were until we started to try to make up for them.

Now understand what your Lord is doing for you. He is liberating you from the need to prove anything to anyone. Your sins are forgiven. They are forgiven because the Lord has overthrown the one who tempted us into these sins. The opportune time for which the devil was waiting to tempt our Lord again was His crucifixion. The crucifixion is the sum total of your forgiveness.

And if your sins are forgiven, then like the Son of God, you have nothing to prove either, definitely not to the devil, but not to yourself either. In fact in Jesus Christ God has declared you to be a son of God. That means that you don't even have anything to prove to God.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.