

In the Wilderness

Mark 1:9-15

The First Sunday in Lent, February 22, 2015

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

The tempter is in the wilderness. He lives there.

The tempter lives in the wilderness in order to entice you. The tempter wants nothing to do with God the Father. He wants nothing to do with what God the Father creates. The tempter hates God's creation. The tempter hates God the Father. The tempter will stop at nothing to destroy God's creation. The tempter hates you. He despises the fact that you are made in God's image. He despises the fact that God has bestowed upon us so many blessings. The tempter resents the fact that we were given dominion over the creation. He wants that for himself. He wants to steal and kill and destroy, but he has no authority to do so. That is why he tempts. He must get someone else to do it for him.

The tempter attempts to use God's holiness against Him. The tempter tempts you. He tempts you who were originally made in God's image. He tempts you because if you succumb, the tempter will be able to use that against God. If you succumb to temptation you will be in violation of God's holiness. If you violate God's holiness it is the nature of holiness to destroy you. And since the tempter hates God's creation, He hates you and wants you destroyed. He will even use God's holiness against him in order to do it.

All you and I must do is resist the tempter when he comes to us. All we have to do is ignore temptation when it comes our way. If we resist temptation, we will not succumb to it. The tempter has no power to make us succumb to him. He is a defeated adversary. There is no power that he has except to tempt. He cannot make us violate God's holiness. He cannot make us rebel against the Almighty. He can only tempt us to do those things. The tempter lives in the wilderness. Wherever temptation is, that is where he lives.

In the wilderness are the tempter's lies. He calls God's word into question. He calls the Scriptures into question. When you are in the wilderness with the tempter, he will say all kinds of things to you in order to get you to question whether or not the Scriptures are really telling you the truth. He will use people who have PhD's in biblical theology to tell you lies about the Bible. The reason that he uses such people is that they have the appearance of authority. They look and sound intelligent. They get themselves interviewed for TV documentaries on the Bible. They produce a line of reasoning that sounds plausible, but is false. It sounds authoritative, but it is false. They will share with you only the parts of the Bible that are useful for their line of reasoning and ignore the parts of the Bible that contradict it. They will say that the Bible gradually formed over time in the thoughts and opinions of men and then explain why the thoughts and opinions of men said what they said in the Bible. Unless you know your Bible well, you will succumb to such temptation. You will hand over to the tempter the authority of the Scriptures and once you do that the tempter can say anything he wants to say to you and you cannot refute him. He is in charge of your life after that.

The tempter will entice you to do those things which violate God's holiness. He will tempt you to do those things which bring impurity upon yourself. He will tempt you to think that the violation of your own purity perpetrated upon you is your fault. The tempter will make sure that you experience shame and that you do not tell anyone else about it. If you told someone else about it, they might forgive you of what makes you ashamed. If you told someone else about it, you might find out that you are not the only one who has succumbed to that particular form of temptation. If you are not alone in your temptation,

you might seek help for your temptation. The tempter does not want you to seek help. The tempter does not want you to confess it. He wants you to go right on violating God's holiness so that you are destroyed. He knows the power of forgiveness and he knows the power of keeping a secret. He knows that the power of forgiveness thwarts his power and he knows that if you keep the secret of your shame, he has you for sure.

When such a thing happens to you, you are living in the wilderness with tempter. He is a waste place. It is a waterless place. It is a place filled with pangs of conscience that you think you cannot do anything about. It is a place of addictions and a land of decadence. It is a wilderness place where you think you are living by yourself. It is a place filled with things that you love and hate at the same time, a place where the tempter promises you everything and delivers on nothing. A place that he has deceived you into inhabiting thinking to find God there and He is not there.

In the wilderness are the wild beasts.

The wild beasts are the servants of the tempter. He does not always deal with you himself. If he dealt with you himself all of the time, you would eventually catch on. You might be able to get yourself free. To keep that from happening the tempter sends the wild beasts against you. The wild beasts are his servants. They are here to do the will of the tempter. They are not the tempter himself, but they do his will. They seek your destruction. They seek for you to violate the holiness of God because they think that by doing so God will destroy you. They want you dead. They do not want you alive. They do not want your good even though they will tell you that.

The wild beasts are the people who tell you that say your sins are ok. Those are probably the worst kind of wild beast. You want to believe that your sins are ok anyway. The wild beasts are only too happy to tell you that your sins are ok. They do not want you to repent of your sins or turn away from them, so they tell you that your sins are ok so that you will keep doing them. Because they have already called into question God's Word, it is easy for them to say what they like. You will not know any better. You have laid the Word of God to the one side.

The wild beasts are the ones who make provision for your sins. They provide you with the necessary items in order for you to commit your sins. They sell you what they need to sell you. They show you what they need to show you. They put on television what they need to put on television in order to entice you to sin. They will post on the internet what is necessary to post on the internet in order to tempt you. They will write the books that they need to write in order to entice you to believe that the things that are contrary to the will of God are really ok. You will then violate God's holiness and they will use God's holiness to destroy you.

The wild beasts are unclean. They want you dead. If they could bring death to you directly they would do so. It would be all over for you. Since they cannot bring death to you directly they do so indirectly. They tempt you.

So John the Baptist comes. He prepares the way for the Lord in the wilderness.

If the Lord is going to save you from the tempter, He must go where the tempter does his work. The tempter does his work in the wilderness, the waste places, where nothing lives. John the Baptist goes into the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord into the wilderness so that He may come to where you are and save you from the tempter.

The Lord does battle with the tempter in the wilderness. He casts out the tempter's wild beasts when they possess people. He tells them not to speak. He knows that if they get a chance to speak they will tempt people and so He silences them.

If the Lord does battle with the tempter He must atone for our uncleanness so that we no longer violate the holiness of God. If the Lord does battle with the tempter, He must forgive our sins so that the tempter no longer has a basis for accusation. Forgiveness is all the more necessary as the tempter will use our guilt and shame against us to drive us into more guilt and shame. Forgiveness relieves us of the guilt and shame and the tempter is deprived of using those things to drive us to more grief and shame.

The Lord must die in order to do these things. And so the Lord does outside the walls of Jerusalem in the wilderness. The tempter does all that he can to stop our Lord from doing what He came to do. The tempter put all kinds of obstacles in the Lord's way. All kinds of the tempter's devils came to oppose the Lord. The tempter even had His own disciples speak against His mission. But the Lord was not deterred by the wild beasts. The Lord was not put off by the tempter. He entered the wilderness to do battle with him and to defeat him.

The angels followed Him into the wilderness. They were there to help Him.

And now the Lord commences His battle in the wilderness. As He did then so He does now, He announces to you your release. He says the kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe in the Gospel.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.