

Worship

Matthew 4:1-11

The First Sunday in Lent, March 10, 2019

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

When the devil tempts you the devil makes out that he is your friend.

When the devil tempts you he makes out as if God is holding out on you. He makes out as if God is a giant killjoy who only wants to throw a wet blanket on your fun.

Jesus has fasted forty days and forty nights. He is hungry. The devil comes and suggests that He make bread out of the stones. By doing so the devil suggests to Jesus that God is holding out on Jesus. If fasting for forty days and forty nights is the kind of discipline that God expects, then God must be out to torture you and make you suffer. Take a little relief from Your suffering and command these stones to become bread.

It sounds friendly. It sounds reasonable. It is also a violation of God's word and so the devil makes God out to be a killjoy who enjoys watching people fasting in the wilderness for untold periods of time so that He may take pleasure in their suffering.

The devil has always been this way.

The devil tempts you in the same way. He tempts you in the same way because he knows that it works. Jesus was tempted in every way the same as you are except that He was without sin. The devil suggests to you that God is holding out on you. The devil suggests to you that God is a killjoy who only wants to delight in throwing a wet blanket on all of your fun.

And we believe the devil.

We believe that when God forbids things that He is forbidding things that would be good for us.

We want to harm our neighbor. It makes us feel powerful. We want to abort our babies. It enhances our lives. We want to beat our spouse. It makes us feel powerful. And if we don't do these things outright, we like to think about doing them because that makes us feel powerful.

The fact that we want to do these things and that we do these things means that we believe that when God forbids them that God is holding out on us. We believe that He should allow us these good things and He does not.

We want our neighbor's wife even though God has not given us our neighbor's wife. We want our neighbor's wife because she is kinder than the wife that we have. We want to fornicate. We want our neighbor's body even though God has not given us our

neighbor's body. We come up with reasons why it is ok. We say to ourselves that it is ok because my neighbor has consented to give me her body and that makes it ok for me to take what God has not given to me. The reality is that we simply like fornication and we have already committed fornication because we like it and we don't like it when God tells us not to do it. We figure that God is a killjoy and just trying to take away our fun. We like our pornography. We try to make it ok. We try to tell ourselves that the women after whom we lust want us to do so or they would not have agreed to pose in these pictures. Or we try to ignore the fact that they are women so that we may treat them as objects. After all they are only picture on the computer screen or on our phone. We enjoy these things and we like them because we like them. The reasons that we come up with for why these things are ok for us even though God has forbidden them are reasons that we come up with after the fact. The truth is that we just like them and we think that God should not have forbidden them, but if God should not have forbidden them, then we believe that God is a killjoy out to take away our fun.

We want more money. We love money. We can do all kinds of things with money. Think of all the things that we can do and buy with money. Think of all of the prestige that we have when we have money. Think of the admiration that we have from others because we have money. People actually want to be us because we have money. They admire us and some of them even flirt with us because we have money. We would like some more. We don't like it when God tells us not to love our money. We don't like it when He tells us that the love of money is the root of all evil. We love our money and we do not want God to tell us otherwise. We believe that God is a killjoy trying to take away our fun. And even though God has not given us our neighbor's property or money we try to acquire it and tell ourselves that it was ok to acquire it because it was legal to do so.

We enjoy damaging our neighbor's reputation. Gossiping about our neighbor is fun. After all our neighbor gives us so much material about which to gossip! He is veritable fountainhead of easy jokes. We enjoy looking righteous in comparison to our neighbor. We run him down so that we may look good and we like that. We talk about how our neighbor is slow in getting his jobs done so that we may look efficient by comparison. We love to be able to do this. And God seems like a killjoy when He forbids it. It seems like God is holding out on us when He tells us no.

And I could go on. I have not even mentioned disobeying our parents which we do so often so that we can have a little fun and God seems like He just wants to take away our fun when He commands us to honor them. I have not even mentioned the abuse of alcohol which is what really makes a party fun especially when everyone else there has also had too much to drink. I have not even mentioned the thrill seekers who

want to jump off of tall buildings like the temple and do other unsafe things simply because it gives them a thrill and they cannot understand why God would forbid such things.

It is because we believe the devil. We believe that God is a killjoy. We believe that God is holding out on us. And when we believe the devil we give the devil the one thing that should only be given to God: faith. And every sin that we commit is more and more evidence that we believe the devil and not God. And since faith should only be given to God and not to anyone or anything else we demonstrate that when we believe the devil and give him faith we are in fact worshipping him. We have fallen on our faces before the devil and called him our lord and our god. Each and every sin that we commit proves it.

The devil has been doing this since the beginning.

God told Adam, "You may eat from any of the trees that are in the garden, but from the tree that is in the midst of the garden, that is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. On the day you eat of it, you will surely die."

When the devil approached Eve he said, "Did God really say that you must not eat from the fruit of any of the trees in the garden." It sounds like the devil made a mistake. It sounds like the poor little devil snake made a boo boo and misquoted God on accident. But the devil does not make boo boos. He is too smart for that. He is deliberately misquoting God so that he can plant the idea in the woman and the man's mind that God is a God who holds out on them and won't let them eat any of the trees.

In her arrogance the woman tries to correct him. She corrects the devil's boo boo and makes sure that he knows what God really said, but when she does the fact that he has suggested that God is holding out on them goes unaddressed.

Then later the devil tells the woman and the man, "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will know good and evil. You will be like God." Once again the devil suggests that God is a killjoy holding out on them and keeping from them the knowledge of good and evil.

Adam and Eve believed the devil just like we do and they took of the tree and they ate. They ate because they did not believe in God. They ate because they believed the devil. Everything that does not proceed from faith is sin.

And what has been the result of our faith in the devil?

The result is that we do harm to our neighbor. We would kill him if we could. We are satisfied to hate him and in our little world of hate. We live by ourselves and do nothing good to our neighbor even when he is in need. And our neighbor suffers and

we suffer when others do the same thing to us and the more we hate the more others hate us and downward it goes. The love of many grows cold.

The result is that we engage in our fornication and then don't have any sexual appetite or energy left for the one to whom we do pledge our lives in marriage. We look at the pornography and we have no sexual energy left for the one to whom we have pledged our marriage vows. The family dissolves. Our children are distant. We are alone.

The result is that we take our neighbor's money or possessions if we can. And if we can't, we can at least covet and desire them. And we are dissatisfied with our lives, bitter toward God and toward others because we do not think that we have received what we ought to have received.

The result is that we do damage our neighbor's reputation and when he finds out that we have done so he damages it in return. And when he does so the community of which we are both a part divides one taking my side and the other taking the side of my opponent and no one trusts each other anymore.

The result is the chaos in which we live. It is our fault. It is not the fault of some wicked people who make our laws in some capital far off somewhere. It is not the politicians who make our laws in our state. It is not those evil people who vote against us that make this chaos. It is us. We make the chaos. We participate in it and we do so willingly. The reason that we participate in it is because we believe the devil and not God. And because we believe the devil and not God we have worshipped the devil. We have bowed down to him and by doing so given him all of the kingdoms over which we reigned as people made in the image of God. And the chaos ends in only one place where chaos can end: death, death now, and death forever.

I don't know who is going to defeat the devil, but it is not going to be us. Many of us cannot even fast one day, much less forty of them. Thank God Jesus did.

Many people read the account of the temptation of our Lord in Matthew 4 or Luke 4 and mistakenly believe that the reason the account is there is to instruct us on how to deal with temptation. They view it as a specific application of the old question, "What would Jesus do?" All we have to do is quote the Bible at the devil and all will be well. Well, some of us don't know the Bible well enough to quote it and it doesn't help when the devil quotes the Bible also.

While quoting the Bible against the devil will work that is not why the account is here. The account is here to show that Jesus who is authentically human, as human as you, did overthrow the devil. Thank God someone did because we surely have not.

When you hear the account of our Lord's temptation I want you to think of David and Goliath. Goliath taunted Israel and asked Israel day after day to send forth a champion to fight Goliath. If Goliath won, Israel would become the slaves of Goliath and his fellow Philistines. If the champion from Israel won, Goliath and the Philistines would become the slaves of Israel. None of the Israelites would go up against Goliath. They were afraid. They knew that they would lose. Then David went forth and defeated Goliath. David defeated Goliath because David had faith in God. He actually believed God when God called Israel God's army. And since Goliath was obviously defying the ranks of the living God Goliath deserved to die and so David knew that God would be with him.

The devil has successfully tempted humanity for generations. Generation after generation of human beings have tangled with the devil and lost. Each one ended up in sin and death. And now with the coming of Jesus humanity finally has a champion to go out into the wilderness and defeat the devil.

The reason that Jesus successfully defeated the devils is because Jesus believes in God. He actually has faith. He has faith such that when God baptized Jesus and called Jesus, "His beloved Son," Jesus actually believed God.

So when the devil comes to Jesus and says, "If you are the Son of God" Jesus knows that the devil is questioning the Word of God and Jesus believes the Word of God and therefore does not have to submit to the devil's temptation.

Luke's Gospel records that the devil left Jesus until an opportune time.

When would that time be?

When those who passed by the cross of Jesus while He was hanging there and dying they said, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!"

And oh how He could have done it! He could have come down from the cross. That would have been a blaze of glory and a major defeat for His enemies. But if Jesus comes down from the cross, there will be no atonement for you and me and we will remain in our sin and in our death. And if we remain in our sin and in our death, then the devil will win and will have his way.

But the Lord can recognize the devil when the devil is speaking. The devil is the one who says, "If You are the Son of God..." And so when the people wag their heads at Him while He is dying for their sin and point out how powerless and helpless He is at their hands, they quote the devil and say, "If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." Jesus has heard the devil's words before. He did not submit to the devil the first time the devil spoke those words. He will not submit to the devil now. Jesus believed God then and Jesus believes God when Jesus is hanging on the cross. Jesus

completes His mission. He suffers and dies. He sheds His blood and your sin is atoned for. You are released from your sin and by being released from you sin, you are released from the power of the devil. This is how the saints defeat the ancient dragon by the blood of the Lamb.

And thank God that He does it. None of us could.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.