

## A New Adam

Matthew 4:1-11

The First Sunday in Lent, March 5, 2017

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

When our Lord is tempted He has just been baptized. The voice from heaven has just said that Jesus is His beloved Son. When Jesus goes into the wilderness the fact that Jesus is the Son of the Father serves as the basis for His temptations.

The first two times the devil tempts our Lord He says, "If you are the Son of God..." He questions whether or not Jesus is the Son of God. The devil knows very well that Jesus is the Son of God. That is not the devil's point in bringing up whether or not Jesus is the Son of God. The point of the devil bringing up whether or not Jesus is the Son of God is to see whether or not Jesus believes that He is the Son of God. If Jesus doubts whether or not He is the Son of God, then Jesus does not believe the voice of the Father that came from heaven when Jesus was baptized. If Jesus does not believe the Father, then Jesus does not have faith. If Jesus does not have faith, then Jesus is no different from Adam. Adam had no faith either. That is why Adam failed. If Jesus has no faith, then Jesus will fail also.

The devil is smart enough not to ask Jesus directly, "Do you believe that you are the Son of God?" That would be too obvious. Jesus would be able to see that one coming. And even if Jesus did not believe that He was the Son of God, if the devil asked him the question in that straightforward of a manner, Jesus would have given the right answer anyway. It would be like asking a hypocrite nowadays, "Do you believe in Jesus?" They will say yes even though they don't. While faith will have the right answers to questions, faith is more than simply having the right answers to questions.

And so the devil tempts Jesus. He is looking for unbelief. He is looking for Jesus to doubt the word of the Father. "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

When the devil issues the first temptation, I can see why Jesus would want to turn the stones into loaves of bread. He has fasted forty days and forty nights and is hungry. What is more difficult to see is why it would be a sin for our Lord to turn the loaves into bread. Is there some commandment in the Old Testament that forbids sons of God from turning loaves into bread? Didn't God give Israel bread to eat when they were wondering in the wilderness? Didn't God call Israel His son in the Old Testament? If Israel was the Son of God and God gave Israel to eat bread in the wilderness, why shouldn't Jesus who is the Son of God have bread to eat in the wilderness?

The sin is in the fact that the devil has set up the miracle of changing stones into bread as the means by which Jesus may prove that He is the Son of God. The problem with Jesus changing the stones into bread is simple. If Jesus changes the stones into bread, He will be proving that He is the Son of God by performing a test. If Jesus performs a test to prove that He is the Son of God, it means that He does not believe that He is the Son of God. In order to successfully navigate this temptation, Jesus must not do anything. To do anything would be to doubt the word of the Father and believe the suggestion of the devil that Jesus might not be the Son of God.

Jesus successfully navigates the temptation. He reminds the devil that no one who is human lives on bread alone, but on every word that comes out of the mouth of God. Without the word of God we die. With the word of God we live. Who would want to live without the Word of God?

Now, this is the same temptation that Adam faced in the garden.

In the beginning God created Adam. Adam was God's son. He was God's son not in the unique sense that Jesus is, but that does not mean that the sonship of Adam was fake or unreal. Adam was a real Son of God because God created him. Since we are all creations of God we exist together in Adam. We all stand or fall together before God in Adam.

In the beginning God gave Adam Eve. God placed the man and his wife in the Garden of Eden to work it and to keep it. God told Adam that all of the fruit of the trees of the garden belonged to him for food. The only exception was the tree in the middle of the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God told Adam that on the day he ate of that tree that Adam would surely die.

Eventually the devil tempted Adam. He tempted Adam not by having conversation with him directly, but rather by having conversation with his wife. Adam who was there the whole time permitted this conversation to take place by his silence. Although Adam should have said something to prevent Eve from talking to the devil, Adam said nothing thereby allowing the conversation to take place. Even though it was Adam who had received the commandment of God and not Eve Adam allowed Eve to talk to the serpent about the commandments of God. He thereby forsook his vocation as head of household and allowed the devil to speak in his home.

When the devil did speak, the devil said to Eve, "Did God really say that you may not eat of the fruit of any of the trees that are in the garden?" By asking the question in this way the devil is suggesting that God is holding out on Adam. The devil is suggesting that there are some good things which God is not giving to them.

The devil has to do this in order for his temptations to work. Adam lacked nothing in the garden so the devil must convince them that they are hungry for something when really they are hungry for nothing.

In the end Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Part of the reason why they did so was because they believed that God was holding out on them and depriving them of something that was rightly theirs. Believing that means that they believed that they were hungry and so they ate. Believing that also meant that Adam did not believe that he had everything that he needed from God which means that Adam no longer believed that he was the son of God. The only reason that Adam no longer believed that he was the son of God and succumbed to a hunger that was not there was because he no longer believed in God. Oh he believed that God existed to be sure, but that is not what real faith is. Real faith not only believes that God exists, but also believes everything that God tells it. Adam did not believe that. Rather Adam believed a false word. He believed the word of the serpent. He believed the devil. And when he believed the devil, he gave into his appetites and he ate.

So where Adam failed Jesus was successful.

In the second temptation that the devil places in front of Jesus the devil quotes the Bible.

The devil takes Jesus to the highest point on the temple. He questions whether or not Jesus is the Son of God a second time. He tells Jesus that if He is the Son of God that He should throw Himself off of the temple. Then the devil quotes the Bible. He quotes Psalm 91 where it stands written that God promises that His angels will watch over you to guard you in all your ways. His angels will lift you up so that you do not strike your foot against a stone.

The devil of this temptation is that the devil is quoting the Bible. The Bible is God's Word and so the devil is quoting God. God is the Father of Jesus. The devil is quoting the word of the Father. And at first glance it would seem that if Jesus does not throw Himself off of the temple that it will mean that Jesus does not believe in God. After all if Jesus does not throw Himself off of the temple, doesn't that

mean that He doubts whether or not God will save Him in spite of the fact that God promised that He would save Him in Psalm 91?

The problem is that once again the devil wants Jesus to doubt whether or not He is God's Son. He wants Jesus to prove it. If Jesus proves that He is God's Son by throwing Himself off of the temple, that will mean that Jesus doubted whether or not He was God's Son even though God told Him He was at His baptism. If Jesus jumps off of the temple ironically it will prove that He does not believe God because it will mean that He thought that He had to prove that He was God's Son when the Father had already told Him that He was God's Son.

But what about the more obvious problem that if Jesus does not jump it looks like He does not believe Psalm 91? Jesus has an answer for that. He quotes Deuteronomy where it stands written that people shall not put the Lord their God to the test.

Once again this is a temptation that Adam failed.

The devil told Adam that if Adam ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that Adam's eyes would be opened and that he would know good and evil. The only reason the devil could say any of that was because God Himself had called the tree the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. All the devil was doing was taking the name that God had given to the tree and drawing the logical conclusion that if the tree is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil then it must give the one who eats of the tree the knowledge of good and evil. And by the way it did.

If Adam proves that he believes that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil will give him the knowledge of good and evil by eating of the fruit, he will be proving that he did not believe God when God told him that on the day he ate of the fruit of the tree he would surely die.

Adam eats of the fruit of the tree. His eyes are opened. He proves that it is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He dies.

Adam failed the temptation, but Jesus succeeded.

When we get to the devil's third temptation of our Lord, the devil no longer says, "If you are the Son of God." It is obvious even to him by now that tactic does not work. Our Lord unquestioningly believes that He is the Son of God.

Plus, the devil is a little desperate here. The temptation that he puts before our Lord is an obvious one. He shows our Lord all the kingdoms of the world and offers them to Jesus if Jesus will bow down and worship the devil.

This is a surprisingly bad move on the devil's part. He is so crafty and subtle most of the time. Here he is blunt and obvious. The reason that he is blunt and obvious is because his subtlety is not working. He has tried twice to trick our Lord and has not succeeded. Our Lord has seen through all of the deceptions and has successfully overthrown the devil.

The devil is impatient. He is not willing to try more crafty tactics and there are limits to how much craft and sneakiness that the devil has. So the devil resorts to the obvious and in so doing the devil tips his hand.

In this final temptation the devil finally reveals what he really wants. He wants all things to submit to him. He wants all things to bow down to him. He wants all things even God Himself to submit to his will. He wants to be above God Himself. And so when God incarnate is finally in front of him, the devil has the boldness to ask for it. Worship me and I will give all of the kingdoms of the world. The devil knows full well that if Jesus worships the devil and Jesus obtains possession of all of the kingdoms of the world then the devil will retain control over all of the kingdoms of the world and he will have Jesus also.

But this is obvious. Jesus easily dismisses it. "Be gone, Satan, for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'"

In spite of the fact that this is the most obvious and crass temptation, Adam failed this one also. Adam listened to the serpent. He listened to the serpent when the serpent lied to him and told him that he would not die when he ate from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He believed the serpent when the serpent told him that his eyes would be opened if he ate of the fruit. He believed the serpent when the serpent implied that God was holding out on Adam when He forbade Adam from eating of the fruit of one tree when God had given Adam all of the fruit of all of the other trees. And since Adam listened to the serpent and believed the serpent he was taking what was rightly due to God and giving it to the serpent. And so he obeyed the serpent and disobeyed God. Obedience and disobedience spring from faith. And since Adam listened to and believed the serpent and not God, he was bowing the knee to the serpent and worshipping the serpent rather than God. The serpent likes things that way. He wants everything to bow the knee to him.

Adam failed the easy. Adam failed the obvious. And so do you.

You listen to all kinds of things that are false and you believe it. If it sounds good to you, you believe it. And you continue to believe it even when the Word of God is brought to bear on the issue. You continue to believe what you have heard from somewhere other than God rather than to listen to God and what He has said.

You dismiss the Bible by saying that it was only for those people back then and not for us today. You dismiss the Bible by saying that parts of the Bible are unfair and I don't have to listen to them. You believe the documentary about the Bible that you saw online or on TV that allows to dismiss certain parts of the Bible as irrelevant or unenlightened. You do not realize that you are listening to the serpent when you do that. And when you believe something else over against what God has said, then you are listening and believing the serpent. That is worshipping the serpent.

And when you listen to the serpent you wind up with power. It is a temporary power, but it is a power nonetheless. When you listen and believe the serpent you acquire power among those who also listen to the serpent. They like you and reward you for listening to the serpent.

You are no better than Adam. If you had been there, you would have made the same decision that Adam had made. And so would I.

When Adam fell the whole race of humanity fell across time. We all fell together before God. We all demonstrate the same manifest original sin that Adam committed: unbelief.

We have bowed the knee to the devil and he likes it that way. The devil is unconquered until Jesus. When we get to Jesus finally there is a human being who does the right thing. When we get to Jesus finally there is a human being who actually believes in God and by that I mean that Jesus believes what God tells Him. God told Him that He was His Son and Jesus believed it in spite of the devil's insinuations. Jesus is the conquering hero who has overthrown the devil He did it for our sakes because we could not do it ourselves.

I want you to think of the devil in the same way that you think of Goliath. I want you to think of Jesus in the same way that you think of the boy, David. Jesus is after all the son of David in addition to being the Son of God.

In the Old Testament the people of Israel often fought with another people group called the Philistines. You can check geography to see that they were fighting over farmland that stood between their respective territories. The Word of God is not so much interested in that as it is in faith.

So one day the Philistines brought their army into a certain valley. The Israelites brought their army to the other side of the valley. The two armies camped on opposing sides of the valley. While they were camped there the Philistines sent out a champion named Goliath to taunt Israel.

Goliath was nine feet tall. That is tall by our standards, but in the ancient world when the average height was five feet, Goliath was even more of a beast. Goliath came from a Philistine town called Gath. The Bible records that Gath also produced a six fingered man who had full use of all six fingers. My theory is that Gath had a series of genetic mutations going on there that produced these unusual human beings.

Anyway, Goliath would go out from the Philistine ranks and approach the ranks of Israel. He offered Israel this deal. Let a member of the Israelite army come out and fight with Goliath. If Goliath won, the Israelites would be the Philistine's slaves. If the Israelite won, the Philistines would be Israel's slaves.

All of the men of Israel were terrified to go out and fight Goliath. They knew that if they did Goliath would kill them and the Israelites would become slaves to the Philistines. Notice that carefully. The entire fate of the entire army hangs on the outcome of one battle between two champions.

As you know in the account David believes in God. He does not merely believe that God exists. He actually believes in God. Goliath has mocked God by mocking the people of God. David understands that when God is mocked God will give answer. Therefore David knows that if he fights with Goliath God will defeat Goliath in judgment for the mockery that Goliath has leveled against Israel and thereby against Israel's God.

As a result of his faith David volunteers to fight Goliath. At first the king of Israel thinks that if David is going to do this, David should take some armor to fight Goliath. After all Goliath has his own mail that he is wearing. In addition Goliath has an armor bearer who is carrying his shield and all of his weapons. Goliath is a professional warrior. He has probably made deals like the one he offered Israel to other countries and came out victorious.

David insists that he is not accustomed to using armor, but since David was a shepherd and had defended the sheep against the bear and the lion, he was sufficiently prepared to go against Goliath. Notice how faith does not lay aside common sense, but faith does not allow common sense to have control of the situation.

David goes against Goliath with a sling. Goliath mocks David and is insulted that Israel should send a boy against him. David uses his sling and the stone sinks into the forehead of Goliath. Goliath dies and David uses Goliath's own sword to cut off Goliath's head.

Now Goliath had mocked Israel for several days before David finally came forth and defeated him.

In the same way ever since Adam and Eve we have waited for a champion to come forth from the human race to defeat the serpent which none of the rest of us could defeat. Humanity finally has such a champion. It is Jesus, the Son of God. He has overthrown the devil and you are no longer slaves of the devil.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.