

March 9, 2025 First Sunday in Lent

Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

PRELUDE: Rebekah Olson

CALL TO WORSHIP: From Psalm 91

PASTOR: He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High

ALL: Will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

**PASTOR: I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge
and my fortress,**

ALL: My God, in whom I trust."

PASTOR: Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare

ALL: And from the deadly pestilence.

PASTOR: He will cover you with his feathers,

ALL: And under his wings you will find refuge;

HYMN #325 "Under His Wings"

CONFESSION OF SIN: Psalm 51:8-13 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. Amen

CHILDREN'S SERMON:

READER: Glenn Gustafson

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: Deuteronomy 26:1-11 When you have entered the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, 2 take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the LORD your God is giving you and put them in a basket.

Then go to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name 3 and say to the priest in office at the time, "I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come to the land the LORD swore to our forefathers to give us." 4 The priest shall take the basket from your hands and set it down in front of the altar of the LORD your God. 5 Then you shall declare before the LORD your God: "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. 6 But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, putting us to hard labor. 7 Then we cried out to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. 8 So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders. 9 He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; 10 and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, O LORD, have given me." Place the basket before the LORD your God and bow down before him. 11 And you and the Levites and the aliens among you shall rejoice in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household.

EPISTLE LESSON: Romans 10:8-13 But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: 9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. 11 As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." 12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile-the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

READER: Here ends the reading of God's Word.

CONGREGATION SINGS: God be praised, for His glad Tidings!

CONFESSION OF FAITH: *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen*

GLORIA PATRI: **Ambassador Hymnal p. 4 (please put on screen)** *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER

PRAISE AND WORSHIP: **Chosen by Krista Johnson**

SERMON: **“THE TEMPTER’S TACTICS,” Luke 4:1-13**
Pastor Tom Olson *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

DEVIL: One thing that I find to be very interesting is that people argue against the existence of God but I have never heard anyone argue against the existence of the devil and demons. We all know from firsthand experience the power of the temptations that the devil and his helpers put into our lives. Jesus understands too since he became a man and was tempted by the devil. Hebrews 4:15 says He understands our fight with temptation because **“Jesus was tempted in every way, yet without sin.”** Undoubtedly, this passage is just one of many times of temptation in his life before He went to the cross since Satan was always looking for an “opportune time” to trip Jesus up.

ANGLE: You have heard many sermons about this text and how Jesus used the WORD OF GOD to fight the temptations of Satan. Today I would like to look at it from the angle of THE TEMPTER’S TACTICS. I am sure you will be able to identify something in your life right now where Satan is using one of these tactics on you.

I. APPEAL TO APPETITES

Luke 4:1-4 *Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. 3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'"*

FOOD: Satan appealed to Jesus’ appetite for food. Jesus had fasted for 30 days. Jesus was hungry. It was a legitimate need. He would not have turned down food from another person but He was not going to cooperate with the schemes of the devil. The devil wanted Jesus to turn the stones to bread and that was not the will of God.

GOOD: We all have legitimate appetites. We crave food, drink, warmth in the winter, shade in the summer, physical affection in marriage, beautiful scenes to look at, intellectual stimulation, love for beautiful music, desire for true friendships, desires to create and use our gifts and abilities. These are, in and of themselves good. The Bible says this about God’s creation in **Genesis 1:25**, **“...God saw that it was very good.”** So don’t ever feel ashamed about your desires and appetites. God wants us to experience pleasure. In order to do that in a healthy way, we need to exercise our appetites in God’s way.

IMPROPERLY: The devil knows we have appetites and tempts us to use them improperly. He turns our love of good food into

gluttony. He turns our desire for physical intimacy into adultery. He turns our desire for good friends into destructive relationships. Fasting is a useful tool for keeping our desires healthy. Knowing the Word of God keeps us from falling into temptation.

WORD: Psalm 119 has many verses about this like *Psalm 119:9&11, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word...I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."*

MARRIAGE: One of my favorite lines from our marriage ceremony is this, *"Mutually share the trials of this life and ABOVE ALL ENDEAVOR TO HELP ONE ANOTHER IN THE WAY OF LIFE ETERNAL."* We all have appetites that the devil will try to tempt us with. But we can HELP EACH OTHER stay strong. At our Ash Wednesday service last Thursday night, we split up into small groups and shared areas where we are being tempted and agreed to pray for each one during the 40 days of Lent, to be strong and victorious over these temptations.

APPLICATION: Do you have any area of appetites where the devil is tempting you? Don't be afraid to ask a Christian FRIEND to PRAY for you to have the victory. The second TACTIC OF THE TEMPTER is...

II. GET RICH QUICK SCHEMES

Luke 5:5-8 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 So if you worship me, it will all be yours." 8 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

PRINCE: The Bible in John 12:31; 14:30 and 16:11 calls the devil **"THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD."** Many people, leaders and even whole governments and perhaps even nations are under the

control of the devil. **God gave man the authority over the world and men give the authority to the devil when they follow him.**

CROSS: Satan knows that Jesus wants to draw the world to himself and take up the rightful sovereign leadership of the world. But the path that heaven demands THE CROSS At this point the cross and all its physical pain and spiritual agony is facing Jesus.

EASY: The devil offers Jesus an EASY WAY to take possession of all of the evil kingdoms of this world without the cross. I liken it to a get rich quick scheme. I fell for two quick gain investment schemes that my financial advisor advised and lost thousands of dollars. Something in us wants to get money or fame or power quick and easy.

HURT: I have advised my children to get ahead through hard work, frugal living and prudent investing. I want them to learn from my mistakes. If it is an easy path to wealth, chances are it is not safe. And even if the easy path works, it results in bad consequences. One study of lottery winners reveals that most lottery winners say that all that quick and easy money hurt them much more than it helped them.

ASSIGNMENT: Jesus knew that God had an assignment for him to do and He was not willing to deviate from it. *Hebrews 12:2 puts it this way, "Who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame..."* When we come to the end of our time on earth, it will not be nearly as important how much wealth we had as whether we accomplished the purposes that God had for our lives. The reward will come in heaven when God says, *'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'* (Matthew 25:23).

END: The author of "Seven Habits of Highly Successful People" puts it this way. **"Live with the end in view."** THE TEMPTER'S TACTIC" is to offer "GET RICH QUICK SCHEMES." Thirdly...

III. TWIST THE WORD OF GOD

Luke 5:9-12 The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. 10 For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; 11 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." 12 Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

TWIST: The devil tries a different tactic with Jesus. He uses the Word of God but TWISTS IT to his purposes. The devil knows the Scriptures well. Jesus did not fall for it. Jesus knew the promise of angelic protection was with him. I don't doubt that there were a number of times angels came to deliver Him from the people who tried to throw Him over a cliff in Nazareth or other times they wanted to stone Him. But this would be tempting God and that would be wrong.

EXAMPLES: The devil does this Scripture twisting all the time. False teachers tell their churches that sexual activity without marriage is OK if you really love that person. They quote verses about the importance of love to say it. But it is in direct violation of God's commandments for purity. The devil quotes to us verses about forgiveness to get us to condone sin. He quotes verses about eating with thankfulness to convince us to overeat. He quotes verses about prayer to get us to neglect action. He quotes verses about action to get us to neglect prayer. He quotes verses about being slow to speak and quick to listen to get us to neglect telling people about salvation. THE BIGGEST LIE IS OFTEN A PARTIAL TRUTH. There are devious people who twist the Word of God. The worst one is making Jesus look like a good teacher but rejecting that He is God in human flesh.

STUDY: How should we respond to this? There is only one way: KNOW THE WORD OF GOD YOURSELF. We don't have a

shortage of Bibles but we have a lack of knowledge of the Word of God in our modern world. The more we get to know the Word of God, the less vulnerable we will be to the attacks of Satan.

KENDALL: Perhaps I told you a while back that the highly respected preacher from London, R.T. Kendall, who now is an old man said this and it caught my attention. Even though he is highly educated he does not recommend lots of education for pastors. He said that the great need today is for preachers **who know the Scriptures and who take prayer seriously**. That thought convicted me and inspired me.

REAL: I have heard it said that people who look for counterfeit money don't study counterfeit money. They study real money. The more they get to know the real thing, the easier it is to spot the fake. If you know the Word of God, the devil can't get by with twisting it for you. Final tactic of the devil is to...

IV. WAIT FOR A MOMENT OF WEAKNESS

Luke 5:13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

WAITING: The devil didn't give up on tempting Jesus to sin. But he simply went back into the shadows and waited for another opportunity to get Jesus.

The Apostle Peter says it this way in *1 Peter 5:8-9 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith...*

VULNERABLE: What are the opportune times that we feel vulnerable to the devil? I will tell you mine:

1. When I have succeeded and am proud
2. When I have failed and am in self-pity

3. When I am tired
4. When I am lonely
5. When I am hurt by someone's words or actions
6. When I have extra money
7. When I am out of money and desperate
8. When I am jealous of others

PREVENTION: These are a few of the times when I feel tempted to sin. These are the times the devil waits for to trip us up. This is why we need people to pray for us in times of weakness. This is why we need to gather in church. This is why we need good music and literature. This is why we need to try to avoid circumstances where sinning comes easily.

NAME: When the devil tempts you in a moment of weakness call upon the Name of Jesus. Do it out loud if you need to. The Name of Jesus is powerful. ***Romans 10:13 "Whoever calls on the NAME of the Lord will be saved."*** One song calls the Name of Jesus "Our strong tower." That would be a defensive tower where archers can shoot arrows at the advancing enemy.

JESUS: Jesus did something we have not done. Jesus passed the test with no sin. He made it all the way to the cross with no sin. He offers us His perfect robe of righteousness as a gift. He transforms our lives.

WESLEY: Charles Wesley puts it this way, "Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we seek Thy face. Till we cast our crowns before Thee. Lost in wonder, love and praise." THE TEMPTER'S TACTICS are very strong, but Jesus is stronger. *May the peace of God that passes understanding, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

HYMN #262"How Firm a Foundation"

Lord's Prayer
Benediction

Doxology: Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise Him all creatures here below, Praise Him above, ye heavenly host, Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. A-men. A-men. A---men.

Postlude: Rebekah Olson