

SERMON FOR SUN. MARCH 6, 2022

Lent 1C 2022 Lk 4:1-13 “Our Mighty Fortress” Use the Hymn plus LW 391

Dear fellow redeemed of, by and for Christ, from the dawn of time, mankind has been full of excuses. The most common one is that: The devil made me do it. If only that were so! Then I would have an excuse!

From the garden of Eden to today, humanity has been passing the buck of responsibility for our sins to someone else.

We’ll say my no-good neighbor made me do it. Or my wife or children made me do it. The internet made me do it. My boss made me do it. My friend made me do it. It’s everyone’s fault but mine. It’s not my responsibility.

But it’s not true. The devil, in fact, did not make us do it.

Our sin is our responsibility. We make ourself do it. We know that, but we don’t want to admit it. The devil doesn’t have us on strings, like a puppet. We **chose** to follow him instead of God.

Sometimes because we want to, even though we know better. Sometimes because we enjoy it. Greed feels good. Gossiping is enjoyable. We’re in charge, we call the shots. Everyone else does. Why not us?

Well, there are ten reasons why not. Ten Commandments. These we have not kept with the 100% fidelity that would be required for us to be saved by our obedience to them.

We must take responsibility. At the divine seat of justice on the last day, “**the devil made me do it**” is not an acceptable plea. Guilty or not guilty? We are guilty. I did it. You did it.

The Holy Gospel for today is about temptation. But it is no comfort to us if we only see Jesus as an *example* of how to overcome temptation with the Word of God and single-hearted devotion to God and His ways.

That’s no comfort. Because we *know* we should do as Jesus does. Sometimes we do. Mostly we don’t. Indeed, we are all guilty as charged, guilty as sin.

But the Holy Spirit didn’t inspire today’s reading to encourage us to try harder the next time we’re tempted.

No, this passage is essentially a news report from the front lines of a battlefield.

Jesus is not showing us **how to fight – He is fighting for us!** A common theme in both Matthew and Luke is that Jesus is the good Son, the faithful Son. He is the new Adam, but one who is battling the same old enemy.

Jesus had just been baptized and is beginning His public ministry. The first thing He does is confront the enemy! And look! The **devil cannot** make Him do it!

We are told of three temptations, but surely there were more throughout the forty days. The devil was relentless. Perhaps it is the “top three” we are given in detail.

But what a three! Food and power and glory! Isn't that what all of us want? But where we are weak, He is strong.

Our Lord's joy is doing the will of His Father – not in earthly pleasures. He only uses His divine power for our sake, not for His own betterment. The devil cannot make Him do it.

Not for lack of trying! First, not surprisingly, Satan lies – he offers all the kingdoms of the world, but they were not his to give!

And he deceives – twisting the Word of God by taking it out of context. Then he tries to cause doubt – “God wouldn't treat His Son like this, would He?” Those are real temptations.

We are so easy to tempt! But not this One! The devil cannot make Him do it.

It is as we just sang: “***But for us fights the Valiant One, whom God Himself elected.***” He fights with the Word of God. And He is victorious!

Not only in the wilderness but also on the cross. He wrestled with our sin there on Calvary, too. Yet He did so, knowing that if He didn't die in our place, we would be condemned.

He spoke the Word of God also from the cross. The prophetic words he'd inspired were His Mighty Fortress!

Satan was there too. The taunts at the cross sound so familiar! This was the opportune time!

If you are the Son of God, jump down! Save yourself, Jesus!

But as tempting as that must have been, the devil still could not make Him do it. Jesus stayed, enduring the shame of the cross for you and me.

“***But for us fights the Valiant One, whom God Himself elected.***” In the wilderness, and on the cross.

And He won! It didn't look like He did when He died. But three days later, Satan's prey was gone! The empty tomb declared Jesus' victory over all of his enemies.

But Satan catches us, doesn't he? We can't resist! We listen. We follow his deadly advice. But he does not have us!

No! Much to Satan's dismay, just when he thinks he has us, he opens up his trap and finds it empty!

How can this be? We lost the fight, didn't we? We've given into temptation many times. We're guilty, aren't we?

We are, unless we share in Christ's victory. Unless we were there with Him in the wilderness and on the cross.

And since we're baptized into Christ, we live in Him, and He also lives in us.

Take eat, this is My body. Take and drink, this is My blood. Yes, we are in Him and He is in us. And so, by grace through faith His victory is my victory. Over sin and Satan and death and grave.

He did it for me. He took my place. To do all I cannot do. To do it right.

His birth, His circumcision, His life. His temptation, His obedience, His faith. His suffering, His death, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension. It's all ours! Credited to us by God given faith that receives all that is His and then gives it to me.

What belongs to the head belongs to the body. And we are the body of Christ. Though we've repeatedly sinned, we're declared not guilty! By faith, we're declared to be as innocent as Jesus Himself. It's true.

This is why Satan always tempts us to doubt God's promises. This is why he wants you to look to yourself, not Christ.

That's why the devil hisses in your ear: **If** you are a son, a daughter, of God, you wouldn't be acting that way. If you are a child of God, why does he let you suffer!

Follow me, Satan says. I know a better way, an easier way. But it's all a pack of lies spoken by the father of lies!

So today we confess that on our own, we're no match for Satan's wiles. On our own, we'll give into temptation every time.

But we're not on our own. **Come to Me**, Jesus said. So, the Holy Spirit enables us to repent and return. And then we'll hear, "***I forgive you all your sins.***"

I am not Satan's. I am a child of God. That's why Jesus taught us to say: "**Our Father.**" But how can this be?

How can poor, miserable sinners like us be children of a Holy, Holy, Holy God?

Because in baptism, His Father became our Father. His life is our life. His victory is our victory. His kingdom is our kingdom.

Which is why Jesus taught us to pray, "**Thy kingdom come.**" And it does come to us, as He comes to us.

In Word, in water, in bread and wine. Through these we receive His Spirit.

What do we need that we do not have? Jesus has given us Himself. He has given us His Father. He has given us His Spirit. The Holy Trinity. What else could we possibly need?

But still we are tempted. As the old hymn says, "***I walk in danger all the way.***" The devil does not give up, and I am weak.

So Father, we pray, "**lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**" When we pray this, we're asking the Father to not leave us on our own. Send your Spirit to guard us.

Grant me your Spirit, to lead me to Christ and to keep me in Christ. Where I am safe.

On my own, I lose every time. But in Christ, I overcome and obtain the victory. In Him, I live. In Him, I am forgiven.

In Him, Satan's traps are empty because Jesus is our Mighty Fortress. Amen.