"Listen to the Scapegoat" -- Luke 4:1-13

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho
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Invocabit - The First Sunday in Lent
Pastor Michael L. McCoy

"Be not far from Me, for trouble is near
and there is none to help." Psalm 22:11

Dear Baptized,

The Epiphany season of the Church year is a time of manifestation and it begins with the Voice of the Father at the Baptism of Jesus, the Son of God, and as we noted last week, ends with the Voice of the Father at the Transfiguration of Jesus, the Son of God. So also does the season of Lent begin and end with Jesus bearing the burden of the sins of the world. On the first Sunday in Lent, Jesus is in the wilderness as the temptation for Jesus to sin is conjured up and delivered by Satan. On Good Friday, Jesus is on the cross as the sin offering to the LORD.

These two events are the fulfillment of the preparations for drawing near to the LORD in the holy place. Moses wrote what the LORD said: "Then he (Aaron) shall take the two goats, and set them before the LORD at the door of the Tent of Meeting; and Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel. And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD, and offer it as a sin offering; but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel. ... The goat shall bear all their iniquities upon him to a solitary land; and he shall let the goat go in the wilderness" (Lev. 16:9-10 & 22)

At the Baptism of Jesus, the Father placed His hand upon the head of His Beloved Son and "the Spirit immediately drove Him out into the wilderness" (Mark 1:12). Jesus is not only the Lamb of God slain upon the altar of the cross as the sin offering for the LORD, He is also the Scapegoat upon Whose Head the iniquities of all are placed and Who is then driven into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. What happened to the Scapegoat out there in the Exodus wilderness? What was said? What was done? What a blessing it is for us to have the event recorded and to be able to hear the Good News. The sermon text this morning is the Gospel Reading. Therefore, please ...

... "Listen to the Scapegoat"

"And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing in those days; and when they were ended, he was hungry. The devil said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.' And Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone."'

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

Did you notice that Satan did not just tempt by ordering? There is a prelude that the devil begins

with and it is called doubt: "If You are the Son of God." But this is not singular doubt but double-doubt. First there is this: "Jesus, You doubt that You are the Son of God, don't You? If the Father really meant what You thought He said when that sinner engaged in that baptizing mumbo-jumbo in the Jordan, then You certainly would bask in glory and not have to be bake out here in this parched wilderness with such gnawing hunger as you are now feeling. Oh sure, maybe God meant it at one time, but that has been such a long time ago that you were baptized. So, son of Joseph, this certainly would not be happening to you 'if You are the Son of God', would it?"

Dear Christian - whether you are young or old, male or female, Jew or Gentile - you are all sons of God by Baptism. "In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27). You are a son of God just as surely as you are baptized and you are not called to doubt this historical truth. Thus, when assaulted by Satan or your sins rise up against you or your conscience oppresses you, then you are to reply: "But I am baptized! And if I am baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body" (LC, Baptism).

Second, there is the other doubt - the reverse-psychology doubt: "Jesus, I don't believe that you are the Son of God. You are just going to have to demonstrate it to me. Tell you what, why don't you show me, and in the process, at the same time, put an end to that grinding starvation that is permeating your body and plaguing your mind. Show yourself, show me and demonstrate to the entire world that what you feel is the truth. "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

Dear baptized, the Voice from the cloud said, "This is My Son, My Chosen; listen to Him" (Luke 9:35). Therefore, listen to the Scapegoat as He replies to the first temptation: "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" In Paradise, Adam ate and sinned; in the wilderness, Jesus does neither. Instead, He goes directly to the Word given to the children of God at the end of the forty years in the wilderness during which they ate the manna from above that they "might know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD" (Deut. 8:3).

What proceeds out of the mouth of God is His Word and Jesus is "the Bread of Life ... for the Bread of God is the One Who comes down from heaven, and gives Life to the world" (John 6:35 & 33). Thus the LORD feeds the body with the manna of this world and feeds the soul with the Word that proceeds out of His mouth, especially when He says "This bread is My Body" in His Holy Supper.

"And the devil took Him up, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to Him, 'To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours.'"

Did you notice that Satan did not just tempt by offering? There is a also a prelude here that the devil begins with and it is called the nerve of panache or the flair of marketing. If the Deceiver can cause Jesus to succumb to a theology of glory then the marketing of the church and the massaging of the pastors will not be necessary. So, the Tempter presents our Lord with a panoramic view of history featuring all the kingdoms of the world. He claims ownership and desires to hand it over to whomever he wills ... in this case, to the Christ Jesus Who truly is the Creator of all that was made and the King of creation. What must Jesus do? Only this ... just once, one time only, this one tiny condition ... bow down and worship Satan.

Oh how the multitudes have fallen to this! The Apostle Paul wrote of many who, instead of being in the service of the LORD, became immersed in creature worship. "They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). "Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles" (Romans 1:23-24) or a serpent. This is the worship of Satan and the Word of God says, "You cannot drink the Cup of the LORD and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the Table of the LORD and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the LORD to jealousy?" (1 Cor. 10:21-22).

The Voice from the cloud said, "This is My Son, My Chosen; listen to Him" (Luke 9:35). Therefore, dearly beloved gathered in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, listen to the Scapegoat as He replies to the second temptation: "It is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only shall you serve.'" In Paradise, Adam kow-towed in the service of Satan and sinned; in the wilderness, Jesus does neither. Instead, He goes directly to the Word given to Moses and intended for the good of the people called out of Egypt, "You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cleave to Him, and by His Name you shall swear" (Deut. 10:20).

"And he (Satan) took Him to Jerusalem, and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here; for it is written, "He will give His angels charge of you, to guard you," and "On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone."'"

Did you notice that Satan did not just tempt by commanding? There is a postlude that the devil employs in order to convince; namely, the quoting of Scripture. In order to deceive and cause doubt ... to accuse and bring death, Satan will quote, use, twist and misuse the written Word of God against the Incarnate Word of God. This hanging the Word onto the debate seeks to validate the devil's sinister command. "And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14).

As before, the devil begins doubt: "If You are the Son of God." As with the first temptation, there is double-doubt and the first is doubt concerning the Person of Jesus ... whether God truly is His Father and whether Jesus is begotten of the Father from eternity. Second, there is daring-doubt. Lucifer, the fallen angel, dares, "Go ahead and jump. You will not die. For if you are the Son of God, then He will send His angels to protect you." "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5).

God the Father spoke, "This is My Son, ... listen to Him" (Luke 9:35). Therefore, dear children, listen to the Scapegoat as He replies to the third temptation: "And Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "You shall not tempt the LORD your God."'" Faith is not a blind leap in the dark that puts God to the test. Also, "let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted with evil and He tempts no one; but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire" (James 1:13-14). In the Garden of Eden, Adam fell; on the Temple in Jerusalem Jesus did not jump. You are not called to a blind leap. Rather, faith looks to God's special revelation and the Christ Himself goes directly to the same Word of God that you have in your Bible, "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test" (Deut. 6:16).

"And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time."

Thus did "the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan" (Rev. 20:2) withdraw from the wilderness. Oh, he will continue to plot and scheme in his attempt to intercept and prevent Jesus from accomplishing the atonement for the world. In fact, we will hear the Satanic echo when Jesus is atoning for your sins, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matthew 27:40). We will hear more of this during the Wednesday evening vespers here at Our Redeemer as we continue to hear the words of Jesus spoken while on the cross. For now, out in the wilderness, Satan has lost the battle and slithers from the scene.

But wait, dear children, something happens that has never happened before. Behold, the Scapegoat returns from the wilderness! Jesus is the only one that ever returned from the wilderness of sin. Where is Jesus going? Well, first into Galilee - to Capernaum and Nazareth. But He does not stay. Behold, the Scapegoat is going up to Jerusalem, for not only is He the One Who was driven out into the wilderness, He is also the One "on which the lot fell for the LORD" - the One which will be presented, not by "Caiaphas, who was high priest that year," (John 11:49) but by the true High Priest, Jesus the Christ. Christ the Victim, Christ the Priest will offer Himself as the Sin Offering for the world.

"Since then we have a great High Priest Who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One Who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning. Let us then with confidence draw near to the Throne of Grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16). Amen.