

Rejoicing in What Jesus Does for Us

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT [b]

February 18, 2018

MARK 1:9-15

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." ¹² The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him. ¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

Jesus is baptized in the Jordan by the prophet John for us. In this baptism, he publicly gives himself to be numbered with the sinners. Though with no sin of his own, he enters the water where the sinners have been having their sin washed away, and he lets himself be counted with them.

Jesus comes up from the water, and the heavens open, and the Holy Spirit comes upon him in the form of a dove, and he hears the voice of his Father: ***You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.***

The Father has sent him to save sinners.

That statement right there can give us pause.

Why did the Father send his eternal Son to Earth? In order to show God's almighty power? Or to exact retribution? No. To do that he could've sent fire and brimstone. To live a perfect life, thus giving a

pattern and model so sinners could have an example of how to live? No. We already had the Ten Commandments.

The Father sent his beloved Son to Earth to save sinners, so that all who have faith in him would not be condemned but would have life-everlasting.

He sent him to be numbered with sinners, to call them his friends. The Father made his Son, who knew no sin, to be sin himself, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him. [2 Corinthians 5:21]

So when Jesus walked out of the Jordan, having been baptized into unity with the sinners, that's when the Father says, ***You are my beloved Son. I am well pleased in you.*** [Mark 1:11]

The Father is pleased in his Son at just that point, the point where his Son becomes numbered with the sinners in order to be with them and save them.

Then, as he bore the sin of the world, the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan.

He did this for us. Having joined himself to all those who are tempted to sin, and who fall to sin, and are afflicted by the demons, and who go to bed at night fearing God's retribution, Jesus now gives himself to be tempted by our accuser.

So Jesus is tempted by Satan. Jesus is true Man, as human as you and me, so Satan used Jesus' bodily appetites and desires, tempting Jesus to make bread from a stone.

Then Satan tempted Jesus to test God, by throwing himself off the Temple, to see if his Father would rescue him.

Then Satan tempted Jesus with acclaim and power, offering him the kingdoms of the world.

All these temptations belong to us. We are tempted with bodily appetites. We are afflicted with the temptation to think that if God loves us, he has to protect us in just the ways we determine. And we are enticed into thinking that worldly success and acclaim is somehow a sign of God's blessing.

Jesus turned each of these temptations back with a three word reply: *It is written.*

It is written, *You shall live not by bread alone, but by the Word of God.*

It is written, *You shall not test the Lord your God.*

It is written, *You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.*

He turned back every temptation with the Word of God. And every temptation is just that, to grasp things for ourselves, to make our way with our own worthiness, rather than receiving all things as good gifts from our God, as gifts coming to us through his Word.

Jesus did this for us. He underwent temptations of bodily desire, spiritual despair, and human pride, on our behalf.

He made himself subject to the temptations we fall to, so that he could defeat them in our stead.

Jesus did what we cannot do. He perfectly obeyed his Father's will, he fully kept his Father's commandments—and it is this full and perfect obedience to his Father that he accounts to us.

Jesus gives us that in our baptisms. In joining himself to us in our baptisms, he accounts to us his perfect obedience to his Father's will.

In Baptism, he gives us not just his passive obedience, where he passively allowed himself to be humiliated and crucified on our behalf, he gives us also his active obedience.

His active obedience is where he perfectly keeps his Father's Law in loving his neighbor and in hearing his Father's Word, receiving all good gifts from his Father, even when he is tempted to take them on his own.

This active obedience is now ours. In our actions toward our fellow man, in our worship of God, we have not kept our Lord's Word. But this is accounted to us purely by grace from Jesus. He was numbered with the sinners. Now he has numbered us with him.

We will continue to be tempted. Until Jesus comes again, the devil will continue to tempt us to be more concerned with ourselves than we are with our neighbor, and to look for God's blessing in our lives according to success or power or acclaim we have here on Earth, rather than according to his Word of promise.

Satan will continue to tempt us. But much more, the Lord continues coming to us in his Word.

After Jesus was baptized, and then was tempted,

Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

[Mark 1:15]

Jesus does it all for us.

He's baptized to be numbered with us and to take our sin upon himself.

He is driven into the wilderness to be afflicted with our every temptation, yet without falling.

Then he goes into Galilee—that's where he will be found with sinners, cleansing some of leprosy, freeing

others from demon-possession, healing others and giving sight to the blind, eating and drinking with sinners and outcasts, and in Galilee, he is proclaiming the Gospel. He is preaching the forgiveness of sins; he is returning the sinner to his Father's sheepfold, he is going to the cross where he will pay the ransom.

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand,"

he says.

"Repent and have faith in the gospel,"

The time is fulfilled for us whenever Jesus is coming to us in his Word of the cross, where all righteousness was fulfilled.

The kingdom of God is at hand for us whenever we hear his Word confronting us with our sin and cleansing us with his Gospel.

Repentance is his gift to us where he of turns us from our own worthiness to his gift of righteousness.

To have faith in the Gospel is nothing other than holding onto to what he has done for us at his baptism and temptation on our behalf, holding onto his redemption of our lives on the cross, and holding onto these gifts as he continues bringing them to us in his Word and Sacraments of forgiveness.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.