

Sermon for the First Sunday in Lent

'Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.'

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The Lord enters the desert, and for forty days He fasts, and it is written, *'he was hungry.'*

Satan approaches Him to test Him, and these words crawl from his mouth: *'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.'*

The Lord answers in a very strange way: *'Man shall not live by bread alone.'*

In an ancient garden, of an unknown place, Eve, too, and Adam with her, was tested by the devil, for she too was offered food to eat and was promised that, having eaten it *'she would be like God.'*

Adam and Eve ate, and were condemned, for though they were men, they sought to be God.

Christ did not eat, and was glorified, for though He is God, He sought to be man.

Therefore, the Lord responds to the devil: *'Man shall not live by bread alone.'* He who is God; He who sits at the right hand of the Father; He who reigns from everlasting to everlasting; this one, who is the Lord of angels, when Satan asks Him if He is the Son of God, responds that He is a man; a man that knew hunger; a man that shall *'live by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'*

'For Christ, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality of God something to be grasped.'

All the mystery of the Incarnation is gathered up and offered to us in this, the temptation of Christ; for behold, the Second Adam; Him who in the wilderness did

not eat, but lived by the word of God to atone for him who in a garden did eat, and abandoned the lone command given him.

The Son has not merely taken on human flesh; this is not the whole meaning of His becoming man. Rather, He shall rewrite the entire history of humanity in Himself. In every regard where man blasphemed and sinned, the New Adam shall humble Himself before the Father.

It is this humility which Adam lacked, that the Christ shall reveal.

For the devil seeks to tempt Jesus by flattery, for *his mouth is an open sepulcher, and his inward part is very wickedness*. But Christ's *power shall be made perfect in weakness*. By the humility of Christ shall humanity be redeemed.

For humanity, having fallen, was given by God *the law and the prophets*, that they might be unto them a guide; and furthermore, a temple, that the Almighty might dwell in their midst. They would be sheep in the flock of the one true God. And yet *they would not*. Seeking not to be guided by a Good Shepherd, mankind whored after all the heathen powers of this world, the false gods and pagan idols, that by dominating them, we might not have meekness, but might.

But Satan takes the Christ *to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down.'*

He places Our Lord above the temple, as if to establish Him above the word of the prophets, and the wisdom of the Law, for as God, Christ surely is above all these things. Yet Christ shall not throw Himself down, though it is true that *on the hands of angels he shall be born up*. He shall not, for *man shall not put the Lord your God to the test*.

Our Lord places Himself above nothing that His Father has commanded, but in all things *is obedient unto death*. Even unto death that *man shall surely die*.

Finally, Our Lord is presented with *all the kingdoms of the world*.

'All these I will give you, if you will but fall down and worship me.'

Indeed, this is the eternal temptation of mankind, that if we give ourselves over to the idols, we shall have power, success, satisfaction; that the world will lie at our feet.

Yet behold, Our Lord Christ, who indeed *makes the world his footstool*, does not claim what is in all truth rightfully His, as it is written: *'Ask of me, and I will make the heathen thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.'*

All these things are His, all the nations of the world, all its kingdoms and rulers and powers, all creation, if He but ask. *And yet, he would not.*

For he was made man.

And, as man, He shall *worship the Lord God, and him only shall he serve.'*

Since the Feast of Christmas, we have meditated upon the mystery of what it is for God to have become man. In His Transfiguration, we have seen what man was meant and ever will be.

But during this season of Lent, we do not contemplate what this true man, this Second Adam is, but what He must do.

The service of the word is over. The service of the Sacrament begins. The Lord must complete the mission which mankind failed to accomplish. The Lord, gathering all mankind into Himself, shall *live by every word that comes from the mouth of God*. He shall not abolish the law and the prophets *but fulfill them*. And He shall not seduce the powers that rule over this world, avarice and pride and power, these false gods. Rather, He shall bring about the twilight of the idols.

The devil leaves the Son of Man, and angels minister to Him; and He departs the wilderness back into the city, to the world of fallen men, to our race of disobedience, that He might look upon us with compassion.

A cross awaits Him, that His life might be offered, for such was demanded of Abraham and Isaac, and yet was never accomplished, for they were unrighteous sinners. Therefore, the Son of Man shall complete what Isaac was undeserving to finish, and in doing so, complete humanity, by assuming humanity into the divinity, and incarnating the divinity into humanity. He shall hear the word of His Father, and drink the cup of His wrath to the dregs, according to His Father's will, that we might be made whole:

'For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Psalm 32:1-7; Genesis 3:1-21; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11.