

In the name of ✝ Jesus.

“Have you ever been tempted to sin? We all have. And Satan, the father of lies, will lie to us to tempt us to sin. Jesus shows us how to resist temptation by relying on God’s Word for help, strength, and guidance.” So went the teaser for a sermon based on our Gospel for a Lutheran program being aired around the country.

Now there is no doubt that deceiving Satan is out to get us. St. Peter tells us that our *“adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour”* (1 Pet. 5:8). And St. Paul tells us that *“we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places”* (Eph. 6:12). Therefore, he says, *“put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil”* (Eph. 6:11), as Richard chanted earlier. Moreover, that armor of God includes *“the word of God”* which Paul calls *“the sword of the spirit”* (Eph. 6:17).

So, there’s no doubt that God’s word is a help to us, a strength, and guidance against temptation. To say otherwise would set me against Scripture and our Confessions. Our Confessions say, “The converted person does good to such an extent and as long as God by His Holy Spirit rules, guides, and leads him.” Of course, the Spirit does that through the word. “As soon as God would withdraw His gracious hand from that person, he could not for a moment keep obeying God” (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, II:66). That is, the sinner would fall prey to Satan’s wiles.

So, *“temptations to sin are sure to come,”* says Jesus (Luke 17:1). Nevertheless, I submit, that is not what our texts are about. They are not about Jesus giving us an example to follow or giving us instructions on how to avoid falling prey to temptation.

Our texts set before us a contrast between the first Adam and the second Adam, between the man who was made in the beginning and the One who preexisted creation, between the man formed from the dust of the ground and into whom was breathed the breath of life, and the man born as the seed of the woman in whom is life itself, who undoes the ancient curse of death by being Himself cursed and dying. These two are set before our eyes today.

The first Adam was indeed formed from the dust and made a living being. He was placed in the garden, along with his wife Eve, to tend the garden. They had the run of the place; they had been given dominion; they could eat whatever they

wanted with but one exception: “*of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die*” (Gen. 2:17).

Yet, what happened? The serpent, whom we know as the devil (Rev. 20:2) was too crafty for them. Eve couldn't have been hungry; there was fruit galore in the garden for picking and eating. No, she saw that this food, too, was good, and so she ate; and so did Adam. Could she have turned Satan back with the word of God? She used God's word! “*We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but GOD SAID, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'*” To be sure, she added that last bit, “*neither shall you touch it,*” but that was no attempt to “*relax*” God's commandment. It added an extra layer of protection — to no avail! She ate! Adam ate! They died! We died! We died that day, for on that day when sin entered the world through this trespass, death also entered. As St. Paul said, “*many died through one man's trespass.*”

The second Adam — Scripture doesn't call Him that, but St. Paul does say that Adam “*was a type of the one who was to come,*” and Paul would later call Him “*the last Adam*” (1 Cor. 15:45) — this second Adam was indeed born of the woman and received His flesh from her, but as the eternal Word, He also preexisted her. He Himself was the giver of the Law, and yet, He was born under the law (Gal. 4:4) and submitted Himself to it that He might fulfill it (Matt. 5:17) and so redeem us.

And so, not in the comfy confines of a lush and plentiful garden, but into an empty and arid wilderness, Jesus was led by the Spirit where He fasted forty days and forty nights. “*He was hungry,*” Scripture says, as He was being tempted by the devil. What an understatement! Moreover, His first temptation was regarding food, but He did not fall.

Trying to sow a bit of doubt with the second Adam as He had done with the first Adam and his wife, the tempter began, “*if you are the Son of God.*” Doesn't that sound a lot like, “*Did God actually say?*” The devil, in fact, knew who Jesus was; nevertheless, he plowed forward. “*Command these stones to become loaves of bread.*” The first Adam wasn't even hungry, yet he ate and sinned. The rescued people of Israel in the wilderness were hungry; they grumbled against God—more sin. Jesus was hungry; He was tempted as we are, this time with food, and yet He did not sin (Heb. 4:15). With the “*sharp two-edged sword*” that protrudes “*from his mouth*” (Rev. 1:16), He said, “*It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'*” The second Adam did not fail where the first did, where we still do.

The slandering devil was not done. With the first Adam, the serpent sowed more doubt: you can't trust God's word. In fact, he completely contradicted God: "You say God says you're going to die?" "*You will not surely die.*" So, the first Adam and his wife ate; they died; we died!

The second Adam was tempted again, this time from the pinnacle of the temple: "*If you are the Son of God,*" and "can you trust God?" "Didn't God say He'll send His angels?" Can't you just hear it? "*You will not surely die.*" "*Throw yourself down.*" But the second Adam knew that God was faithful, and God's word was trustworthy. Such a twisting of it wasn't going to fool Him. He would use it: "*You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.*"

But more than that, the second Adam wasn't afraid to die; indeed He would die, though He could have asked for legions of angels to deliver Him from this fate (Matt. 26:53). But Jesus came for this very purpose (John 12:27), to lay down His life of His own accord for us—and to take it back up again (John 10:17-18), so that, in this way, the second Adam's death might destroy death's power over us, and His resurrection might restore to us life, as St. Paul proclaims: "*as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive*" (1 Cor. 15:21-22). Again, "*The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit*" (1 Cor. 15:45).

Still Satan persisted. With the first Adam, this dragon held out the possibility of they not even needing God, really of being little gods themselves. "*God knows that when you eat of [this fruit] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*" "How cool is that?" they surely thought. In fact not just they, but we! Everyone still wants to be his own god.

The first Adam and his wife failed; they ate. Far from being gods, they lost their innocence; they became sinners, idolaters; they became separated from God, fearful of God. What little years they had yet of life would become hard, drudgery, painful. They didn't see it immediately, but they had died. Life is hard for us, too; and we, like Adam and Eve, live for a time, and we die.

Satan had really deceived Adam and Eve with that line, "*you will be like God.*" He really wanted their worship himself, and he shows that card with Jesus. Taking Him up on a high mountain and showing Him "*all the kingdoms of the world and their glory,*" Satan said to the second Adam: "*All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.*"

The second Adam had heard and seen enough. This upstart, created being wanted his Creator to worship him? This was too much: "*Be gone, Satan!... You*

*shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.*” And the angels came and ministered to Jesus.

In all these temptations, dear saints, and yet more to come before His ministry concludes, Jesus would not fail as the first Adam did. He would keep the Law; He would not sin; He did not sin. He went to cross and death not with His own but bearing your sins upon His body. Your trespasses, your record of debt, He nailed to the tree of the cross, a tree of His death and yet for us a tree of life.

Your punishment He canceled there; your forgiveness He earned there; your life He won there, and we are assured of it by His resurrection, for that’s who He is. He is *“the resurrection and the life.”* You’re a sinner ... from birth, and you’ve added plenty of sins to your account. You’re going to die. But believe in Jesus, and though you die, yet shall you live. Believe His promise and *“everyone who lives and believes in [Him] shall never die”* (John 11:25-26). Keep on receiving *“the abundance of [His] grace and the free gift of [His] righteousness,”* the forgiveness of sins. Eat from this tree; eat the fruit of the Tree of Life. Eat His flesh; drink His blood; have eternal life; be raised on the last day. Eat this meal and *“reign in life through the one man—the second Adam—Jesus Christ.”*

So what are we waiting for? Let’s eat and be strengthened for our ongoing struggle against the devil.

In the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit.