

In the name of ✝ Jesus.

The First Sunday in Lent always focuses on Jesus' forty-day fast in the wilderness and His temptation by the devil. This year we learn about it from the Gospel of Luke, which has some nuances. Indeed, Luke seems to be interested in contrasting Jesus with Adam, showing how Jesus succeeds where Adam failed.

Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist immediately before being led out into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. All three synoptic Gospels record the baptism; all three tell of the Spirit's descent from heaven in the form of a dove; all three record the Father's voice from heaven proclaiming Jesus as His beloved Son. But whereas Matthew and Mark move straight away to Jesus' temptation, Luke takes a detour into Jesus' lineage — His genealogy.

Luke's reader knows that Joseph is not the father of Jesus, after all, Luke had already related how Mary and Joseph had not come together as husband and wife, that Mary remained a virgin. Thus, the angel told Mary that her son would be conceived by the Holy Spirit; her son would "*be called the Son of the Most High*"; her son would "*be called holy—the Son of God*" (Luke 1:32, 35). Luke reported how Elizabeth called the baby in Mary's womb "*Lord*" (Luke 1:43); how Mary called Him "*God, my Savior*" (Luke 1:47); how the angels called Him "*Christ, the Lord*" (Luke 2:11).

That Jesus was God's Son and not Joseph's had been well established. Nevertheless, Luke emphasizes it again in Jesus' genealogy: "*Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli*" (Luke 3:23), and so forth, through David, through Abraham, through Noah, all the way to "*Adam, the son of God*" (Luke 3:38).

With not just Jesus, but also the first Adam thus identified as "*the son of God*," Luke moves us into the temptation account again to contrast the first Adam's failure with the second Adam's success.

You recall that God had fashioned Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed life into him. And God put Adam in a garden. Moreover, God told Adam that he could eat anything he wanted in the garden except from one tree. Surely therefore Adam had no reason to be hungry when he encountered the crafty serpent!

Jesus, the second Adam, on the other hand, had been led by the Spirit into the wilderness, and Jesus had not eaten anything during his forty-day excursion. For completeness, Luke states the obvious: Jesus "*was hungry*." And that left Him vulnerable to the devil's wiles — so the devil must have thought. A fruit was the downfall of the first son of God; "let me try the same approach on this upstart Son

of God”: *“If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.”* *“Man shall not live by bread alone”* was Jesus’ answer. Even in hunger, Jesus did not succumb. Round 1 goes to Jesus.

The devil thought he might deceive the second Adam as he did the first with a desire for glory. Remember, how he enticed the first Adam with an attack on God’s goodness. He accused God of holding something back from them: *“when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil”* (Gen. 3:5). Of course, the devil lied. It’s his character to lie (John 8:44). He’s a liar, so he lies. He lied with Jesus, suggesting that Jesus could enter into His glory by bypassing the Father’s purpose in sending Him., But Jesus’ glory was in being lifted up on a cross, not kneeling down to worship this deceiver. *“You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.”* Round two to Jesus.

The devil had one more trick up his sleeve. It’s brazen, but it could work like it did on the first Adam: twist the Lord’s words so that they contradict what He really said. With the first Adam, it was *“You will not surely die”* (Gen. 3:4) if you eat. But they did die, and all mankind since them is born under a death sentence (Rom. 5:12). With the second Adam, the devil twisted God’s word from the Psalmist to get Him to think that God would not allow suffering, pain, or death, but that He would *“command his angels concerning [Jesus], to guard [Him],”* that they might *“bear [Him] up [on their hands,] lest [He] strike [His] foot against a stone.”*

But omitting *“in all your ways”* (Ps. 91:11) gave the impression that the angels would protect Jesus, even if He would follow a path contrary to the Father’s will, that Jesus could cast Himself down from the temple and they would save Him. Jesus Himself said that He could *“appeal to [His] Father, and he [would] at once send me more than twelve legions of angels,”* but Jesus didn’t, for His path was to endure the cross, not avoid it. And so, Jesus blocked this last blow. *“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”* Round 3 went to Jesus also. It was unanimous. Jesus defeated the devil without fail, as He had to do if His sacrifice was to mean our victory.

In all these ways, the second Adam did what the first Adam did not; He succeeded where the first Adam failed. Thus St. Paul would call the first Adam a *“man of dust”* (1 Cor. 15:47), and we, His progeny, born in his image, are also dust, and to dust we shall return. But the second Adam defeated Satan, not only here in the wilderness but also later on the cross. That was the devil’s next opportunity, and he thought he had won. But this time, death was Jesus’ victory, and resurrection announced it: death has been swallowed up in victory, so that now Jesus for us has become *“a life-giving spirit”* (1 Cor. 15:45). Jesus truly is the Son

of God without fail, and as we look to Him in faith, we become people not merely of earth and death, but of life and heaven. As St. Paul teaches, *“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive”* (1 Cor. 15:22).

And what does all this mean for us now? This life comes to us by faith. It’s by believing in Christ and looking to the second Adam’s works, not your own, that you are saved. It’s by believing in Christ, that is, by identifying with Christ—being united with Him by Holy Baptism, following Him and His word, communing with Him in the supper of His body and blood given for you—not by identifying with some ethnic (Jew or Greek), racial (black, white, brown, yellow), social (rich, poor, elite, common), sexual or gender identity (male or female) that we are saved. Our identity is in Christ.

And this Christian identity should mean something. While our Gospel text of Jesus’ own temptation is not really about teaching us how to overcome temptation, we do know that His temptations move Him to sympathy for ours, and His suffering enables Him *“to help [us] who are being tempted”* (Heb. 2:18) — after all, *“temptations are sure to come”* (Luke 17:1).

And the Scripture is clear that Christians are to try to avoid them. Wise Solomon teaches: *“Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on”* (Prov. 4:14-15). Again, *“Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked; whoever guards his soul will keep far from them”* (Prov. 22:5). Scripture warns of “deceivers” (Eph. 5:6), so when it comes to false teachers, Scripture says, *“avoid them”* (Rom. 16:17).

How? By putting on *“the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”* *“Stand firm,”* Paul says, *“having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication”* (Eph. 6:13-18).

To be sure, we, like our father, the first Adam, will fail. But we have the second Adam on our side, and He cannot fail. The Word, the sinless Son of God, *“He’s by our side upon the plain With His good gifts and Spirit. And take they our life, Goods, fame, child, and wife, Though these all be gone, Our vict’ry has been won; The Kingdom ours remaineth”* (LSB656).

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