

# Invocavit (Lent 1) - 03/10/2019

*Text: Matthew 4:1-11*

The devil is real. Demons are real. We are in the middle of a great spiritual war. Pay attention these next few weeks: in the Gospel readings we will hear all about the spiritual war that the Son of God enters into for us. This spiritual war is the sort of thing pictured in very terrifying ways in St. John's Revelation. The devil and his demons are warring against God and His angels, and you, friends, are in the middle of it. You are the prize.

We can't see all these things going on, for the most part, but they are really happening. We don't see these things as they're pictured in Revelation, but we certainly can feel them. We are tempted by the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. We are tempted and we sometimes give in. But today's Gospel story of our Lord Jesus Christ's temptation in the wilderness by the devil encourages us. In Jesus, the temptations of the devil are overcome.

It's in the devil's nature to tempt, to lie, to deceive. He can't help it; it's just what he does. Jesus tells us that the devil is the father of lies, and a murderer from the beginning. He prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Dangerously for us the devil disguises himself as an angel of light. It brings to mind that wonderful line from Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, about whether a character is a servant of the dark lord or of the good: "I think one the servants of the enemy would seem fairer and feel fouler..."

The devil just cannot help but tempt Jesus. Even though the devil cannot possibly win - and I think he knows it - he still has to confront our Lord. In fact this is the will of

God, that Jesus His Son would be tempted by the devil, for the Spirit led Jesus up **"into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil."**

He tempts Jesus, but it's a losing battle. It's in the devil's nature to tempt to sin, but it's in Jesus Christ's nature that He *cannot* sin. His divine nature is perfectly righteous and holy. Jesus is the new Adam, the perfect man, truly and perfectly in the image of God, and He's just plain going to do what His Father in heaven wills Him to do.

So Jesus meets the devil's temptations. He hears them and then you can almost hear him chuckling, sort of confidently smirking as He announces to the devil that none of these things remotely entice Him. Jesus confronts each of the Devil's lies and temptations with the truth. The truth of God's Word.

He has no need for stones to become bread because the Father has given Him the very best nourishment there is: the Word of God. He has no need to throw Himself down to prove that God will care for Him because the Father has already declared to Him that He is His beloved Son. And besides there is a perfectly good set of stairs to get down from the temple. He has no need for all the kingdoms and power of the world because He has willingly laid aside His divine power and authority in order to come and save His highest creation from their Sin.

Thanks be to God, **"we do not have 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 sin."**

Now it's in *our fallen nature* to be tempted, to give in to temptation, to even think that being tempted and giving into temptation is exciting. We sang about it this morning: "All mankind fell in Adam's fall / one common Sin infects us all... From hearts depraved, to evil prone / Flow thoughts and deeds of sin alone; / God's image lost, the darkened soul / Seeks not nor finds it's heav'nly goal."

I want to introduce you to a term that we use to describe this nature of ours: *concupiscence*. This is the tendency to sin, the ability to sin. You know how when the temptations come and the thought of being a little naughty excites you, how it makes you want to give in to that temptation? That's concupiscence at work. And even if you finally don't give in, it's still reckoned to you as sin. Because you wanted to. Because you were able to. Our fallen nature is that deep. It puts us firmly in the devil's camp.

But, dear Christians, your *new* nature is given to you by your baptism into Christ, apprehended by faith. And it's in your new nature to resist temptation, to fight sin, to cling to God's Word and to your precious Jesus, to say **"Man shall not live by bread alone"** or **"you shall not put the Lord your God to the test"** or **"be gone, Satan** for I do not belong to you any longer. I belong to Christ and He is my Lord. He has paid for me with His precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death. He has shown me that you are nothing but a liar and deceiver who seeks only to murder and destroy. Your false and enticing words do not convince me because God's Word is truth and it has shown me that in His love for me He gave His Son into my flesh and into my suffering and death. And now He has clothed me in Christ. I am His child. I am baptized into Christ! I'm a child of paradise, not of hell. Be gone!"

At the end of the story, Matthew calmly reports that the devil left Jesus. He's almost nonchalant about it. But this is big news. Comforting news. News that encourages and strengthens us in this world where the devil and demons would rage against us.

The devil left Him. The devil left Jesus. With only a Word. And if the devil left Jesus then the devil has left us and there is no one left to accuse us.

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