

Lent 1B (3/1/09 – *Baptism ... Temptation ... Service – Jesus’ & Ours*)

In the Name JESUS. [Amen]

Here we stand at the ***First Sunday in Lent*** and our *Holy Gospel Lesson* from ST. MARK [1.9-15] is taking us back to the ***First Sunday after Epiphany*** – back to the ***Baptism of Our Lord***. So what gives? The paraments are different – the purple of penitence (and the royal nature of our Lord’s Passion) rather than the white of holiness and glory ... the *Gloria in Excelsis* and the *Alleluias* have been set aside ... fitting the somber tone of the season. With our *Divine Service* on ***Ash Wednesday*** we received the ashes of repentance and thus began the penitential season of ***Lent***. So why are we seemingly going back almost two months to the beginning of Mark’s Gospel ... to Jesus’ coming from Nazareth in Galilee to the Jordan ... and to the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry?

Because there were some things we skipped over at that time – some things that fit better in the thought of the present portion of the Church Year ... things that have to do more with ***Lent*** than with ***Epiphany*** (even though they start out seemingly the same ... with our Savior’s Baptism in the Jordan by John). And the biggest something we skipped over was our Lord’s temptation by satan in the wilderness throughout the course of His forty days of fasting. So today – on this ***First Sunday in Lent*** – we consider the *Holy Scripture Lessons* appointed for the day under the theme: ***Baptism ... Temptation ... Service – Jesus’ and Ours***.

After our Lord stepped out of the waters of His Baptism in the Jordan – in fulfillment of all righteousness ... and now in full unity with all of humanity – and after He received the magnificent manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove and heard the voice of His Father in heaven: ***You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased*** [MK 1.10-11], our *Gospel Reading* says: ***The Spirit immediately drove Him out into the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by satan.*** [1.12-13a] ***Why immediately***, we might ask? Well ... because that is the reality, actually – it’s just that we don’t always recognize it. When we were baptized in the Name of our Triune God – baptized into the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and made beloved children of our heavenly Father ... and thus anointed with the Holy Spirit – we found ourselves still in the wilderness of this sinful world ... and ***immediately*** tempted by satan. Not that we weren’t before – tempted, that is – but when one is sundered from the kingdom of the unbelieving and placed by God into the Kingdom of His grace through the water and Word of Holy Baptism ... satan is sure to come around quickly to try and undo God’s grace. ***Immediately*** he comes to us and begins his perpetual dirty work of trying to tempt us into sin and draw us away from God – that’s just how much he despises God and His good and perfect gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation in Christ.

And Christ is **driven** out (*thrown out* ... rather forcefully ... the Greek puts it) into the wilderness to be tempted because, though He fully unites Himself to us by His incarnation and Baptism, He has no intrinsic sin – Christ *knew no sin* was how our Epistle for *Ash Wednesday* put it [2COR 5.21]. We, on the other hand, even **after** our Baptism, still possess that sinful flesh that ever clings to us in this life. **We**, unfortunately, know sin all too well. That's our problem – our constant problem. That's why we need a season like *Lent* to intensely remind us of what we should be doing all along – namely, repenting of our sin ... setting our hearts and minds and souls to resolutely turn away from sin and every temptation and contrariwise to even **more** resolutely turn in faith to God and His Gospel. We need a time to be reminded that we are dust ... and shall return there at the end of our days on this earth. We need a time to hear, particularly, accounts in the life of our Lord like this one – wherein we see, on the one hand, our own great failure to ward off the temptations of satan ... and, on the other hand, Christ's holy fulfillment of all righteousness in our stead and for us ... especially in the face of the devil's temptations.

And so it is that, despite His sinLESSness, Christ would be one with us – would undergo every aspect of our lives in this sin-infested world ... even our temptation by the evil one. Where we habitually and continually fall for the temptations of the devil, Christ our Lord – in His work of undoing the Fall and sin and death – stands firm and faithful. We don't have the last three, great temptation of satan here in our text – the bold yet desperate attempts of the evil one to cause the Son of God to turn away from His resolve of restoring us (and the entire world) to the Father – but we know them ... and we know our Savior's perfect overcoming of those temptations (as well as whatever else the devil threw His way during those forty days).

Even the *forty days* is a sign of our Savior's unity with mankind. For just as the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness **forty** years, so Jesus was in the wilderness **forty** days. But whereas the Lord provided Manna from heaven every morning and quails in abundance every evening, our Savior fasted – yet **without** the bitter complaining ... and **without** the sinful doubting of God's gracious provision. We're more like the children of Israel – even when we have a roof over our heads ... plenty in our bellies ... and more in the refrigerator and pantry. *Thanks be to God, Who gives US the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!* [1COR 15.57] For Jesus' victory over hunger and thirst ... Jesus' victory over trial and temptation ... Jesus' victory over satan ... is accounted **to us** for righteousness through faith.

Today we see that **Christ** is the Blessed Man *Who remains steadfast under trial* – and because *HE has stood the test* ... **He** has **already** received *the crown of*

life, which God has promised to those who live Him [JAM 1.12]. The Lord Jesus was tested in the wilderness ... and approved – for He remained steadfast in faith ... in fear, love, and trust in God His Father above all things ... even when His flesh was sorely weakened by His testing. The Father’s good Word: ***You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased*** can be seen not only as the Father’s loving Word of approval for what the Son had already done ... but also for what He would **yet** do – not only during His forty days in the wilderness ... but throughout His earthly ministry begun in earnest afterward ... leading all the way to His Cross and grave. The hand of faith clings to the Word and promises of God – even **and especially** in the face of trial, tribulation, and temptation.

Jesus’ responses to the devil’s temptations indicate that He **always** clung to God the Father and His good Word – rightly understood in context ... and firmly believed in steadfast faith. And that good Word of God the Father no doubt included **this** Word as well: ***You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.***

And what about you, dear Christian? Have you not also been baptized? Yes, baptized with water and the Word ... and the Holy Spirit descended upon you (though not in bodily form as a dove) ... and the Father speaks His good Word over **you** as well. **You** are His beloved son ... daughter ... child. When satan tempts you to doubt your beloved status before God – whether it be with homelessness (as Christ was thrown out into the wilderness) ... hunger (as Christ fasted forty days) ... or fatigue ... or illness ... or despair because you’re in over your head – remember the Gospel ... hear the Gospel ... believe the Gospel ... trust the Gospel. In Christ – through faith in Him – **you** are the beloved with whom the Father is well pleased!

For as Christ began His ministry – His *Divine Service* – to a world of sinners, that He might reconcile them with the Father and cause them to be declared righteous by His life and death and resurrection, He declares: ***The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel*** [MK 1.15]. These are not mere words of encouragement – though they certainly encourage. In the coming of Christ, the beloved Son of the Father, the time has been (and forever remains) fulfilled ... for in Christ the kingdom has drawn (and forever does draw) near to us. What time has been and forever remains fulfilled? The time when the Son would fulfill the Word of God given through Abraham in our *Old Testament Lesson: God will provide Himself the Lamb for the burnt offering* [GEN 22.8] ... the time for the salvation of the world by the self-sacrifice of the Son of God – the Lamb of God – to take away once-for-all the sins of the world ... **your** sins and **mine**.

And now – here ... today ... in **this** place ... at **this** time – ***the time is fulfilled***

and the kingdom of God is at hand! For this morning Christ has come into our midst and even now proclaims to you the Gospel of God – righteousness fulfilled ... temptation and satan overcome ... the test withstood ... the crown of life obtained ... by Christ ... **all for you!**

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. [Amen]