

First Sunday in Lent (2/21/10 – *Behold, the Son of God, Who Fights for You*)

In the Name JESUS. [Amen]

What is the First Commandment? ***You shall have no other gods.*** What does this mean? *We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.* What is the Second Commandment? ***You shall not misuse the Name of the Lord your God.*** What does this mean? *We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His Name, but call upon It in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.* What is the Third Commandment? ***Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.*** What does this mean? *We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.*

In a very real sense, the last three – and greatest – temptations the devil set before Jesus in the wilderness are an attempt to get the Savior to break the first three commandments. In another context it would **not** have been wrong for our Lord to make bread from a stone. He later feeds 5,000 men ... **plus** an unknown number of women and children ... on only five loaves of bread and two fish – we might well consider that a greater miracle than turning one stone into a small loaf of bread. **But**, Jesus had been led out into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit **without** food. The Son of God was there to feel the full weakness of our human flesh which He had taken into Himself – live in our skin, as it were. The Son was there so that **in** that starving flesh He might be tempted by the ancient serpent who succeeded in getting Adam and Eve to take their eyes off of their gracious and benevolent Creator and look to themselves – making **themselves** into “gods” ... doing **their own** will instead of subjecting themselves to the will of God.

Behold, the Son of God, Who Fights for You! Christ, the Second and Perfect Adam, succeeds where the first Adam (and Eve) failed. Jesus will **not** heed the voice of satan. He will **not** take matters into His own hands – but will wait for the Lord to give Him His daily bread. In God’s glorious plan for our salvation, it is not enough that the Savior simply undo what Adam and Eve – and refuse to eat. He will undo it in grand manner. Jesus,

the Son of Man, was out in the wilderness fasting for forty days and forty nights in order that His refusal to take what seems to be a legitimate – but easier – way out might be all the greater ... and abound to all. As St. Paul says it by inspiration: ***But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one Man Jesus Christ abounded for many.*** [ROM 5.15] Where Adam and Eve failed to rely on the Word of God concerning that one tree and its forbidden fruit, the Savior Jesus Christ completely relies upon His Father and His Word to sustain Him – even in the midst of dire starvation. Therefore Jesus responds to satan's temptation to make a stone into bread: ***It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone."*** And Matthew in his Gospel Account records that Jesus also says: ***but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*** [MT 4.4]

But as we know all too well, satan is not so easily turned aside. He will attack from another angle – and tempt Jesus now with great power and a kingdom and glory that do not require our Savior to sacrifice Himself on the Cross. There is one catch, of course. The devil will not “give” Jesus this kingdom and glory for nothing – as if it were really his to give anyway ... satan is such a deceiver and liar ... claiming to give that which is not his to give at all. The price for this “gift” from the evil one is that Jesus must fall down and worship him. And our Lord's response is again quick: ***It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve."*** [LK 4.8] How powerful the Word of God is – both the written Word ... and the Word made flesh for us and for our salvation. Such a powerful word of our own we do not have. But a simple Word from God on our lips must send the evil one packing – until what he considers a more opportune time, at least ... when we are weak at some point in our lives.

Behold, the Son of God, Who Fights for You! Jesus will not bend the knee to that snake – but later will crush his head as He is bruised on the Cross for your forgiveness, life, and salvation. Jesus will receive His kingdom and power and glory – **not** from the devil, but as He obediently

offers Himself as sacrifice for the sins of the world and commends His Spirit to God the Father ... and then is raised the third day. The Son will worship and serve the Father only – subjecting His own will to His Father.

Now recall that *the serpent* is *more crafty than any other beast of the field* [GEN 3.1]. If he has been undone by Jesus quoting the Word of God, he will quote it himself. *If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here, for it is written, “He will command His angels concerning You, to guard You,” and “On their hands they will bear You up, lest You strike Your foot against a stone.”* [LK 4.9-11] But the devil is, actually, not very creative, since neither can he create ... nor does he bear the image of the Creator. He’s tried this before – in the very beginning – when he said to the woman: *Did God actually say, “You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?”* [GEN 3.1b] The evil one knows God’s Word – he’s heard it a million times before. But he cannot abide it ... or God’s lovingkindness toward mankind. He may know it and cite it – but always out of context ... trying to make it say something it does not ... placing one Word together with another in an attempt to say just the opposite. Beware of his craftiness ... his subtle ways to avert your mind and heart from the truth of God’s gracious Word – to cause you to turn aside from Christ and His once-for-all work of salvation on the Cross. Be steeped in God’s Word – and in the Word correctly explained in the Creeds and in the Divine Service ... in God’s Word that points you always to Christ.

Behold, the Son of God, Who Fights for You! Fix your eyes on Jesus, *the Founder and Perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God* [HEB 12.2]. For He did not *put the Lord your God to the test* [LK 4.12] – but was an obedient Son in all things ... fighting satan in your stead ... overcoming the evil one and undoing the Fall ... that He might restore you and all creation to that original goodness in the sight of God. Fix your eyes on Jesus – *For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame”* ... and *“everyone who calls on*

the Name of the Lord will be saved.” [ROM 10.11, 13]

Temptation will come your way. But don't give in to it. To paraphrase a quote from the Ancient Church: *You can't stop the birds from flying over your head, but don't let them build a nest in your hair.* The evil one will attack you again and again – and all the more when he sees that your final victory is near at hand ... at the end of life. He will tempt you to doubt God's gracious provision – and to take things into your own hands in a way He has not commanded. He will tempt you with supposed power, dominions, and glory – all you have to do is set these things up as your god ... trusting in them rather than in God alone for all your needs of body and soul. He will tempt you by twisting God's Word – taking it out of context ... applying in a way that God does not intend. Any way he can, he will try to take your eyes off of the goal ... off of your promised heavenly land ... off of Christ and **His** work **alone** for your eternal salvation. Strive against such temptations with all your might.

But more than that, recall what we sang in our Hymn of the Day: *With might of ours can naught be done / Soon were our loss effected / But for us fights the Valiant One / Whom God Himself elected. / Ask ye Who is this? / Jesus Christ it is / Of Sabaoth Lord / And there's none other God / He holds the field forever.*[LSB 656.2] And above all, ***Behold, the Son of God, Who Fights for You!*** Behold Jesus and fix your eyes ever on Him. **He** withstood temptation for you – and restores you to perfect obedience to the will of the Father. **He** stood against satan in the weakness of your mortal flesh – and did valiantly ... perfectly trusting our Father in heaven ... holding on to the Word of God in faith ... against ***the flaming darts of the evil one*** [EPH 6.16]. **For you** Jesus had no other god – neither satan, nor worldly glory, nor even His own will. **For you** Jesus did not misuse the Name of the Lord – but called upon it in every trouble. **For you** Jesus kept the Sabbath – holding God's Word sacred ... as a ready defense against all the devil's might. ***Behold, the Son of God, Who Fights for You!*** Jesus you Savior!

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]