

Luke 4:1-13

“Lead us not into temptation.” Jesus teaches us to pray in this way. And yet He was led into temptation. The Holy Spirit did this. He led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the diabolical one. This story does not teach us that Jesus is our example. For then we should pray, *“Lead us into temptation as was Jesus.”* Not to mention that we should also starve ourselves as He did. In our text the very first word is “Jesus.” It has the place of prominence out front. The name Jesus means Savior. And that is what this story is all about. We want to follow Jesus’ example in many things, including the study of Scripture and the manner in which He wielded this weapon against the devil. But more than an example, we need a Savior because we fail daily to overcome temptation even when we follow Jesus’ example.

If you were swimming off the coast of Florida and were caught in a strong current so that you were completely exhausted to the point that you couldn’t even move your arms and legs anymore, and you cried out for help, would you want the lifeguard from the shore to demonstrate how to swim out of the rip current and save yourself, or would you desperately want the lifeguard to come out to you and rescue you?

The latter explains what Jesus is doing in the wilderness. He is rescuing us from the fierce rip current of the evil one. We would be wise to do as Jesus does in studying Scripture so we can use it as our defensive weapon in times of temptation. But when we are spiritually and otherwise exhausted; when temptation comes at us and like a deadly ocean current pulls us, and we can’t even fight it anymore, we are so overwhelmed... we need our Savior to come. We need Him who defeated Satan in the wilderness to defeat him now in our own life.

And as strange as it seems, the way Jesus rescues us from such a watery grave is to have us stay in the water...the water of our baptism. There are no rip currents or undertows here. Your baptism is your place of refuge in temptation. And Satan knows this. It’s why he does not want you to remember your baptism daily by making the sign of the cross. He cannot undo your baptism, but he can use his rip currents to pull you away from it.

Look at how he tempted Jesus. *“If you are the Son of God...”* Twice he said this. Satan does the same with you. *“If you are a son, a daughter of God...”* Yes you are. But how do you know this? By how you act...how you live? Saints are sinners. Jesus knew He was the Son of God because in His baptism God the Father’s voice from heaven declared, *“You are My beloved Son.”*

Your baptism declares the same to you. Your baptism is your identity. It marks you with the sign of Jesus’ cross. It puts His name on you. Your daily life fluctuates. I know this, for mine does too. Sometimes we live like God’s children; other times we don’t. But no matter how you live, your baptism stays the same. It is unshakeable...immovable. Your baptism declares that you, dear sinner, are God’s saint; His precious, forgiven son and daughter.

And therefore the devil will tempt you. Expect it. He came at Jesus with his full arsenal. Will he throw anything less at you? Our text gives us a good idea of how Satan operates. He tempted Jesus with bread when He was famished. Jesus was weak with hunger and Satan knew it. He also knows where you and I are weak. He doesn’t attack your strengths. He comes at you where you

are vulnerable. And that is different with all of us. Some are vulnerable to the allurements and enticements of the world. Others to the pride of the flesh. Some are vulnerable to the pull of addictions, and others to a quick temper. It doesn't make us better or worse if we are vulnerable to one thing or to another. If I point out, to someone's shame, their weakness in one area, my weakness is to be judgmental. And Satan will pull me along in his rip current before I'm even aware of it.

Jesus stopped Satan with Scripture - the living Word of God. It's alive with power because Jesus is alive. He is the living, powerful Word of God. *"In the beginning was the Word...and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh."*

This living Word is the only thing that defeats the devil. We cannot be pulled out of his rip currents of temptation by anything else. This living Word is in your ears this morning. It will enter your mouth in the Holy Supper. And this living Word is and remains forever in your baptism.

You and I are not stronger than Satan. We cannot in any way pull ourselves out of his currents of temptation. Whose name is out front in the place of prominence in our text? Not mine, not yours. Jesus. He's the only Savior you've got. But He's the only Savior you need.

Everywhere He went He defeated the devil. He defeated him here in the wilderness. He defeated him by casting out his demons. And He defeated him on the cross, crushing his head with a fatal blow. And so Jesus can defeat the devil in your life.

What is it that has overwhelmed you? What evil current is pulling you? Where are you vulnerable? Satan already knows. Let's admit that we are not strong but weak. Let's confess our vulnerabilities. Let's repent of trying to save ourself.

Friend, you have a Savior. His name declares it. He forgives you for falling into temptation again and again. He's not against you. He is here to rescue you. Believe this, that His words are for you. Come to His Supper. Remember your baptism daily. In these things Jesus defeats Satan in your life. In these the Savior rescues you out of the deadly rip currents because He is also your Savior. Amen.