

Mark 1:12-13

If you were to take a mirror and hold it up next to our text, you would see its reflection in the Book of Genesis. Now of course, a mirror always reflects an opposite image, and that is what we see here. The beginning of the ministry of Jesus and the beginning of the human race are mirror images of each other. In Genesis we see a perfect garden...Jesus was led out by the Spirit into a desert. There was plenty of food and water for Adam and Eve...for Jesus, just the opposite. Jesus was with the wild beasts...our first parents lived in the garden with animals that were not wild, but were tame, for the world was not yet sinful. As Satan showed up in Adam's paradise, so he appears to Jesus in the desert. And the biggest opposite of all—the first Adam was overcome by the devil's temptation...the second Adam, Jesus, overcame—He did not fall, but resisted Satan and was victorious.

Now as Lutheran Christians we need to ask, "What does this mean, for us?" It means that where Adam failed, Jesus succeeded. And Adam didn't just fail—he failed you. Your destiny hung in the balance in the Garden of Eden. As we sang earlier, "All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall." Adam, we can say, was "pro-choice," using today's terminology. Like a pregnant woman, he carried all of his children within his seed, and his choice for all of his descendants was death. We were "aborted" when Adam gave in to Satan in the garden. Because of his sinful choice we were all born dead. "You were dead in your trespasses and sins," writes Paul in Ephesians. Aborted children have no choice. They have no decision to make in whether they live or die. They die, because that choice was already made for them.

And so with us. Before we were born—when we were still carried within the loins of Adam, the choice was made for us, and he chose death...death for the entire human race. From the first child, Cain, to the last human being who will be born before the Day of Judgment, every child is born a sinner, a slave to Satan, an enemy of God, and born dead—spiritually dead, and destined for eternal death in hell. And we have no say in this. We have no choice, no decision to make. Adam made it once for all.

That's what Adam's sin means for us. He didn't just fail—he failed us. But before we react in a negative way against him, understand this—in his place, you and I would have done the exact same thing. We, too, would have been overcome by Satan. We, too, would have chosen to reject God and go the sinful way. We, too, would have chosen death. We have no more power over Satan than Adam did. As Luther says in his hymn, "The old, evil Foe now means deadly woe...on earth is not his equal."

How would a one-week old child fare against a hungry lion? Better than you and I would fare against the roaring lion, Satan. He would devour us instantly were it not for the fact that Jesus Christ fights for us. Because where Adam failed, Jesus succeeded. Where you and I are powerless, Jesus is victorious. Weak and hungry in the desert, Jesus appeared to be no match for the devil. But the second Adam is God in the flesh, and He wields the Word of God as a mighty weapon against Satan. Matthew and Luke tell us how Jesus hurled the Word of God against the devil as David hurled a stone into the mighty Goliath. And as Adam was the one who fell in the garden, so here in the desert it is Satan who is felled. He is no match for the Son of God. Jesus will not give in to his temptations. He defeats him.

This, in fact, is the reason why God became flesh—to fight against the power of the Evil One for us—to save us from our enemies...to become our Champion. I'm not sure how many of you watched the Olympics last month—the television ratings were way down. But these sporting events teach us about champions. Every time a team or an individual won a gold medal, their country's national anthem was played. Every race, every event, every competition was not just one man or woman against another man or woman—one team against another team—it was nation against nation...one nation against every other nation in the world. When a Norwegian skier won gold, the national anthem of Norway was played because everyone in Norway was victorious. When a member of Team USA won gold, you and I won—even though we were not in Italy at the Olympics; even though we may not have watched the Olympics on television; even though we may not have cared who won. When an athlete from the USA was victorious, the entire USA was victorious. That's what a champion is. A champion plays the game for another. A champion fights a contest for another.

Jesus is our Champion. Adam failed, but Jesus won. He did not win for Himself. He won for you. We were helpless, so Jesus fought in our place. We had no hope, so Jesus came to our rescue. In the desert He fought. On the cross He fought. And He won. "It is finished!" was His victory cry. Sin, death, and the devil were defeated. Jesus won the battle for you.

The gold belongs to you. Jesus puts the wreath upon your head in Holy Baptism. In these waters, and here in His Sacrament, He gives His victory to you. His victory over sin is yours. Your sin is forgiven, for He declares it so. You are forgiven of every sin—completely, perfectly forgiven. His victory over death is yours. Here in His body and blood is life for you—eternal life—it's yours in Jesus Christ. His victory over Satan and hell is yours. Because your sins are forgiven, hell has no claim on you. The Cherubim cannot keep you out of Paradise with their flaming swords as they kept Adam and Eve out of Eden. Jesus gives heaven to you because He won it for you in the desert and on the cross. He is your Champion.

You may not care how many Olympic victories we won...or perhaps you do—but they are, nonetheless, your victories. Jesus fought and won the greatest victory ever...for you. And it's yours free of charge. No decision to make. Forgiveness, life, and salvation are yours in Christ.

Now understand this...when you were baptized into Christ, two things happened: Christ gave you His victory, and Satan became your arch-enemy, for Jesus took you away from his grasp, and he wants you back. When you bring your children to Holy Baptism you are making Satan furious, and you are making your children enemies of Satan. Will you leave your child defenseless against the devil? Having this powerful enemy against them day and night, you and your children need to stay with your Champion in His Word and Sacraments.

You cannot fight the great and roaring Lion without Christ. Do not allow your children to fight their arch-enemy, Satan, without Jesus at their side. Arm them to the teeth! Teach your children of Jesus in your home. Bring them to His House regularly that they may not be defenseless in battle. You would never place yourself or your child in harm's way, would you? Satan is after you and your family. You cannot defeat him! Jesus did not

defeat the devil to teach you how! He defeated Satan because you cannot. He defeated him for you.

Jesus is your Champion. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Be at peace. Do not be afraid. Because with Christ you are safe. And so may God in His grace and mercy keep us steadfast in Christ our Savior, our Champion. Amen.