**Draw Near With Confidence**

**Hebrews 4:14-16**

Invocavit – Lent I – 03.06.2022

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Satan is definitely at work in two of our texts for today. First he tempts Eve to take and eat some of the fruit she was not to eat. Adam, at her side also ate.

I do not know about you, but I can certainly sympathize with their problem. There are so many things which tempt us. We could talk about the biggies – murder, stealing, adultery, and having idols around the house – but those are not the ones which trip us up – we don’t do **those** things. No, not those!

You and I fall into sins that are easier to cover. In fact, they’re the sins nobody really knows about. They are things which people really do not consider sins. We fall to things like; lust in the heart, anger, telling friends about the sins we discovered about other friends, that one-more-than-I-should-have-had before getting behind the wheel, and that unforgiving attitude toward Wilhemena.

Which one seduces you, causing you to fall into sin just about every time? You know the one I mean? It is that sin which never fails to trip you up whenever you encounter temptation to it. You thought you had conquered that sin, and then, something happens and you do it again. You’ve begged God’s forgiveness for it. You’ve gone to the Lord’s Supper to eat and drink of forgiveness for it. You may even have taken it to private confession and absolution, hearing the pastor pronounce forgiveness for it. Yes, it was gone for a while. But, without your thinking about it, against your best intentions, you’ve fallen to it again.

Yeah, I know all about it! No, I do not mean that I know all about ***your*** specific sin, God has not given me the gift of omniscience. I know all about it, because I am just like you. As they say, “I’ve been there and done that!”

What I know is something else, I’ve felt the edge of the sword – God’s Law – convict me of my pet sin. I know what I am not supposed to do, and I know what I, as a child of God, should be doing. I am the one who has heard the forgiveness spoken to my specific sin. I ***knew*** I had it conquered. And then…, it crept back into my life.

Oh, what shame! Then I have listened to the whisperings of Satan, “Todd, how can you call yourself a pastor when you cannot even overcome one simple sin? You know better than that, you preach a great game, you know you aren’t supposed to do that, and yet, you did it again. Do you think God is going to forgive it again? You know there comes a point when God says, ‘enough is enough, you’ve trampled my grace enough, you need to show me that you deserve my forgiveness, and that has not happened.” Ooo, Satan is a devious liar. That’s exactly how it goes.

First the devil tempts you when you are least prepared, and you fall into sin. Then he gets you to be complacent, he doesn’t tempt you with that particular sin for a while. Finally, when you least expect it, when you have confidence in yourself, thinking that you have finally overcome that particular sin, you let your guard down. Why shouldn’t you, after all, that sin is gone. That is when Satan slips in and it happens, you fall right back into that same old sinful habit.

It is after you fall to that same old sin again, that Satan comes in with the second temptation, this one that is even more devious and deadly than the temptation to sin – He comes to tempt you to doubt God’s grace.

Satan would love you to believe that God cannot forgive you, that you have fallen into the same sin too many times, and there are only so many times God will forgive. He tempts you to believe that before God can forgive you, you have to make a more determined effort than are, that there are some sins ***you*** need to overcome.

What a liar Satan is! How terrifying it is, that many people fall to the temptation to doubt God’s grace.

Know this dearly beloved of God, Satan is correct on a couple points. Yes, we are sinners. And he is right that we should be making a concerted effort to overcome sin. We do know right and wrong. Sometimes we simply give in by thinking, “Well, I know God’s going to forgive me, so I’m going to do whatever pleases me.” That is foolish on our part.

God has written His law in our hearts, and He’s explained it quite well. And we are supposed to live according to it. Of this there is no doubt. Lent is the season where we honestly examine ourselves in true penitence and come to the conclusion that too often though, we fail.

It is also true, that if God were to treat us as we deserve, He most certainly would have to punish us – each and every one of us.

Be glad that God does not treat us as we deserve?

In the Old Testament church, God had ordained priests in His church. He called these men out from among the people, they were to come from the tribe of Levi. These men would make the sacrifices which the people brought, to pay for the sins of the people. These priests also made sacrifices for their own sins, for each of them was also a sinner.

God has a better plan though. That is what Lent is all about. In this chapter of Hebrews, just before today’s text, we learned a couple weeks ago that the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. We know no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Our text continues where that text left off, ***Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For 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. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***

God, the Very Word, became flesh for us. He was tempted, in every way we are. Satan assailed Him constantly. Our Gospel lesson account of His temptation in the wilderness wasn’t the only time Jesus was tempted. His everyday life was like yours and mine, but without modern technological devices. The daily temptations which entice you, he faced. He had a right to talk about the sins of His neighbors, for he was without sin. But He did not stoop to that sin either. There was no sin in His heart. He kept the Law perfectly.

Without sin, Jesus’ innocence suffered the wages which sinners deserve – punishment, death, and separation from the Father. He paid the price with His own flesh upon the cross. He was the High Priest who offered up to the Father, His own blood, poured out as the sacrifice to cover sin.

Does Jesus understand our weaknesses? He knows them full well. He sympathizes with our weaknesses for He lived among us. He knows what we endure, for He was tempted as we are.

His throne of grace is the cross, and from the cross He dispenses His mercy. Flowing from His wounds is His lifeblood, shed to purchase forgiveness. Ascended to His rightful place, He bestows His forgiving grace which helps us in our time of need.

How does He do this? Knowing our weaknesses, He ordained that men would be called out from amongst sinners, in a manner like the Old Testament priests, to offer, deliver, and seal the forgiveness Jesus earned with His own blood.

We can draw near with confidence to the throne of God’s grace, there to receive not what we deserve, but what God in His mercy purchased with Christ’s own sacrifice.

Draw near with confidence and hear Christ’s Word of forgiveness which removes all sin and strengthens you to resist temptation.

Draw near with confidence to the throne of God’s grace, eat and drink of the food which He sets before you. This is a gracious meal, it delivers what Christ’s sacrifice purchased – it grants forgiveness, it appeases God’s wrath against sin, and it strengthens faith.

Draw near with confidence to the throne of God’s grace. Christ knows your weaknesses, and invites you to come to Him, for He is your only help in time of need, now and forever more. Amen.