Today is the first Sunday of Lent. We had a beautiful Ash Wednesday service to begin the forty-day Lenten journey. Now, let me briefly explain and remind us of the significance of this season. Lent serves as a time of preparation and increased awareness of the suffering and victory of Jesus. The season serves as a time of self-reflection, confession of sin, self-denial, fasting, almsgiving, and prayer and repentance. Lent offers a chance for us to look again at the terror of Good Friday and the cost of our redemption. It offers us opportunity for a renewed look at the blessing of a Risen Savior, a victorious Savior. Lent has us look again at the price paid for our sin, the reality of our sin, and the reality of our sin in light of God’s Holiness. In the season of Lent, we look again at the available intimacy and loving kindness of our Heavenly Father. Lent is a time of intentional increased awareness and preparedness.

Many people chose to fast from something during this season. Some of us set aside ingestion of food and drink choices to cleanse. Some of us may need to fast from complaining and criticism. But Lent should not be viewed as legalistic or compulsory. It’s an opportunity for renewal and spiritual cleansing. In our Gospel reading for today, Luke 4:1-13, Jesus has just been baptized and is now in the wilderness fasting, and, of course, Satan is there to tempt. This is a battle we all face. And as we learn in this passage, our capacity to repent and resist temptation comes from our relationship with God and the grace of His deliverance. Never does it come from our own strength or initiative. Let me be clear. Jesus did not sin. He never did. Yet Satan tempted Him. This is an example for us. First, it shows us what kind of Messiah He is. Undefeated. Next, it is a strategy to defeat temptation (\*Hebrews 4:14-16). Family, listen. In our

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\*Hebrews 4:14-16

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. 16 Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

temptation, in our humanity, as God’s children we have access to the throne of grace (\*1John 2:15-17). The strategy of our enemy is the same. The temptation to eat something inappropriate worked on Adam (\*\*Genesis 3:1-7) showed temptations of the flesh: Genesis 3:6—lust of the eyes; vs. 4—lust of the flesh; vs. 5—pride. Let me say this: Our enemy knows scripture. And he will twist it. That’s why it is so important for each of us to know it, to hide it in our hearts, to study it, to rightly divine it. Church, listen to this good news. The season of Lent begins and ends in *victory*. In John 16:33, Jesus tells us, “Be of good cheer. I have

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\*1John 2:15-17

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. 16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

\*Genesis 3:1-7

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” 2 The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’ ” 4 “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. 5 “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

overcome the world” (\*1John 5:4-5). Jesus combatted and destroyed every temptation and lie with the word of God. Family, this, our BIBLE, is our weapon. We counter Satan’s deception with Biblical truth. In the Bible, we find what makes us aware and prepared. Many of us here today may be weary. Your soul is tired; you’ve lost battles, but Christian! Listen! God is for you! He is available, available to renew your strength. You may have been spending too much time fighting for victory. It’s time you fight *from* victory (\*\*Romans 8:21-32; \*\*\*1Corinthians 15:57). But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

Family, your identity is important. And knowing it and walking in it is imperative. The Gospel is imperative. It is crucial! Pastor David Lose said this: “I would argue that temptation is not so often temptation toward something, usually portrayed as doing something we shouldn’t, but rather is usually the temptation away from something, namely our relationship with God and our identity we receive in and through that relationship.” You see, Family, we are not just keeping a set of rules. We are guarding and nurturing our relationship and identity in Him—practicing His presence. In Luke 4:3, Satan challenges Jesus’ identity: “If you are the Son of God,” then . . .Attacking our identity as believers is not a new tactic. Paul reminds us in his letter to the Romans, that we are to be

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\*1John 5:4-5

4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

\*\*Romans 8:31-32

31 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

\*\*\*1Corinthians 15:57

57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

led by the Spirit. We are to walk in the affirmation of our faith (\*Romans 8:14-17), not to be shy about our identity as believers in Christ.

Church, listen. This is a wonderful day to start fresh with the Lord, the one who loves you, guides you, guards you, and grows you. Reflect upon this journey, upon Jesus’ sacrifice. Be honest about where you are. Pray as David prayed in Psalm 51:10-19\*\* for a renewed spirit. Remember this journey of Lent begins and ends in victory. Pray church, to be filled with the power of the Spirit. Remember His faithfulness and loving kindness. Be honest. Confess, repent, and rejoice! Look again at our Savior with fresh eyes and a clean heart. Armed with the Word of God and strengthened by prayer, we can all be equipped, aware, and prepared for the journey. He gave Himself for us. We will live for Him.

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\*Romans 8:14-17

14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

\*\*Psalm 51

10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. 13 Then, I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you. 14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. 15 Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise. 16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. 17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise. 18 May it please you to prosper Zion, to build up the walls of Jerusalem. 19 Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous, in burnt offerings offered whole; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Passages in Support of this Sermon

Psalm 91

1 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” 3 Surely he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. 4 He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. 5 You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, 6 nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. 7 A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. 8 You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. 9 If you say, “The LORD is my refuge,” and you make the Most High your dwelling, 10 no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. 11 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; 12 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. 13 You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. 14 “Because he loves me,” says the LORD, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. 15 He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. 16 With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”

Luke 4:1-13

1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. 3 The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” 4 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’” 5 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 If you worship me, it will all be yours.” 8 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’” 9 The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. 10 For it is written: “ ‘He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; 11 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’ ” 12 Jesus answered, “It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” 13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.