

Sermon Matthew 4:1-11

May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

a

The American dream and the desire to be all you can be, tell us that if you want something bad enough, and you are willing to work hard enough for it, you will be able accomplish it. If you can dream it, you can achieve it! And that is true for most a lot of things in this world. You can be a quadriplegic and yet still win the Nobel prize. You can be the underdog in sports and yet come out on top. In the United States some people who start out with nothing become millionaires.

And so with the American dream fully entrenched in our thinking, we assume that the same applies to our walk with Christ. If you try hard enough, if you practice enough, if you surround yourself with the right things, you will be an outstanding Christian. And maybe you will be, after all, we know that the more time you spend in the Word of God, the

stronger your faith will be, and the more certain the Word of God will be upon your thoughts and actions.

But what do you say when you have tried hard enough and spent every waking hour in the Word of God, and yet you are still plagued with sinful thoughts and actions; how can you overcome the devil's temptation?

St. Paul had it right when he said, "The things I want to do I don't do, and the things I don't want to do, I continue doing!" He never stopped trying to overcome, but he resolved himself to seeing that when he tried on his own, there was no stopping failure.

The American dream inside us all, keeps pushing us to do better anyway. We think "Maybe, when I get better at applying the Word, then I will overcome!" And again, that is possible, but the truth of the matter is, even if we were made perfect for a day, we still could fall to the temptations of Satan.

What we forget is that Adam and Eve were perfect at one time. They had God surrounding them. They had perfect communion with Almighty God. This is what Christ has won for us now. They had no sin to deal with until Satan came along. And as soon as Satan tempted our first parents to doubt God's Holy Word, they forever changed life as we would know

it. Even in perfection, we failed to honor the Word of God and keep it. So, why do we think that we can do it now?

All things are possible! If we have faith as small as a mustard seed we can even move mountains. But I think the key to all this is to take “US” out of the picture and lean solely on our Savior.

- So far everything you have heard in this message has been based upon what we do, and how we fail. But as we look at today’s Gospel, we can see the beginning of Christ’s victory over sin. He takes whatever Satan puts before Him and overcomes. And what Jesus does here in this Gospel is what He still does for us now. And we can try to model what Jesus does, in the hope of imitating His strength, but I suggest that as long as we live in this sinful world, with sin-stained flesh, we will never be able to duplicate perfectly what Jesus does. If we could duplicate perfectly what Jesus does, would we still need Jesus or could we get to heaven on our own? And isn’t that Satan’s goal for us, to trust in ourselves and not in our Savior?

Even the disciple, who had Christ before him, could not stand on the water for very long. Although Jesus gives us his strength to do miraculous things, we still need to confess our sins. Although He gives us His victory, we still admit our

failures and we still bow before His perfection. So, as we look at Christ's victory, let us not see it as just a model on how to operate, but also let us take note that only Jesus was able to be victor over Satan.

In the Gospel of Matthew we see Satan trying to do to Jesus what he has done to all mankind. First Satan tries to tempt Jesus into depending not on God but on Himself. "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Satan wanted Jesus to do for Himself instead of trusting in God the Father. This particular lie has worked for Satan when he has tempted you and me time and time again. But Jesus teaches us that this first temptation has no weight. Instead of leaning on what we are to do, Jesus' answer reminds us that we should lean on God.

What words can we live on, instead of depending on ourselves? - Every Word of God, but especially the Words that focus on His LOVE, His GRACE, and His victory over sin. When Satan comes to tempt you, you can say honestly, "I lean on every Word that comes from God, and His "forgiveness".

The second temptation of Satan to Jesus is much like the one put before Adam and Eve. Remember back then, Satan said, "Did God really say...?" this was meant to challenge the authority or clarity of God's Word. Satan is good at giving us

the right Scripture at the wrong time, so that we will understand God in a different light than one that is just and righteous! Some with moral intention are good at telling others what to do, but don't tell themselves how to do it. They might say, "Do not Gossip" but forget to mention that only the love of Christ can halt the tongue. Satan is a great deceiver. And he tries the same trick on Jesus by saying, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you..." But Jesus teaches us again how He responded to such a temptation. 'Surely the Word of God says that, but what really fits for this situation is' "Do not put the Lord God to the test."

The third and final temptation upon Jesus, sought to have Jesus' trust in what the devil could give instead of what God could give. "All this I will give you if you will bow down and worship me." How often this temptation gets us. "If only I had more money", "If only I had more time,". "When I get this particular thing, everything will be better!" Jesus shows us how He dealt with such a temptation when He said,. "Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only." We should try to copy Jesus and imitate what He did before Satan.

And in truth Satan will flee once again, because he is fleeing from Jesus, the SON OF GOD .

According to Matthew, after Jesus was done with Satan, angels came and ministered to Him.

For us, we have more than just the help of angels, we have Jesus himself attending to us, along with the Holy Spirit and our Father. But we are not served only in victory; we are also attended to when we fall. With Christ always with us to pick us up, we can forever bow to Him and His victory when temptations come our way.

Thanks be to God.

Amen

a