

The First Sunday in Lent

“Alone?”

Luke 4:3

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 1st Sunday in Lent is from our Gospel reading, Luke 4:3-4

“And the devil said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.’ 4 But Jesus answered him, saying, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’ ”

So far the text...

Alone...we’re going to focus on that word a bit today. Last week, the Sunday of the Transfiguration, we heard this word in Luke 9:36

“And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.”

Only one person was left to see - Jesus. Moses and Elijah, who were talking with Jesus about His coming death, were no longer with Him after the Father’s voice spoke, **“This is My Beloved Son, hear Him.”**

The word that Scripture uses is “mono” in the Greek. In English we get words like, “monopoly · monoxide · monolith · monogamy · monotone · monorail and monocle”. You can see the singleness, or oneness or aloneness in these words. Monopoly...the goal of the game is for one person to have so much power that no one can compete. Of course, our government tries to break up monopolies so that there is fair competition and no one company alone can set the prices of a given commodity.

Monogamy, is God pleasing in a marriage, that is, each spouse is faithful to one another alone...as opposed to “polygamy” where there is an open marriage involving many people.

So Jesus was “mono” after the Father spoke. The saints in heaven, Moses and Elijah, who were conversing with Jesus, were no longer present. But with Jesus still, were Peter, James and John – human companionship for a time, until all would desert Him when He was arrested.

As we hear in John 16:32, **“32 Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.”**

Jesus spent 40 days and nights of alone time immediately following His baptism. There was no human companionship. Yet, was Jesus alone in the desert?

The obvious quick answer is no. The devil was there, constantly tempting Jesus. There were many temptations, of which we have three of them recorded for us.

Alone with the wild beasts, the Gospel of Mark says. And yet, was Jesus really alone to combat the devil? Hear again the opening verse of our Gospel.

“Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,”

Jesus was not alone, but filled with the Holy Spirit. He is the Christ, the anointed One...annointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism. Jesus did not get to choose His temptations, the Holy Spirit led Him, but never left Him alone. And, the Father was always with Him.

As Colossians 2:9 reminds us:

“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;”

And Jesus had for His defense against the devil the powerful tool of God’s Word. **“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’ ”**

“It is written”...“It is written”.

And we also hear in our Gospel that the angels came and ministered to Him. Jesus was never alone. And neither is the Christian in whom the Holy Spirit makes His temple.

Yes, we too face many temptation in this life from the same devil. He knows his time is short. He tries above all to wrest from our hands the great tool for our defense – God’s mighty Word. If the devil can succeed in causing us to doubt God’s Word or leave aside God’s Word and sacraments – then he is winning.

The devil wants us to feel like we are alone in our battles. He wants us to think that God has abandoned us and left us alone. He wants us to think that God has rejected us and no longer cares for us when tough tests come our way.

It’s true that everyone likes to have some alone time. Why? For the Christian, it’s time to read and meditate on God’s Word and talk to God in prayer. It’s time to be strengthened by God’s Word to go into battle with the full complement of armor – the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, the shield of faith, the shoes of the Gospel and, of course, the sword of God’s Word.

Oh, the devil will use every trick in the book, every half-truth, every lie to persuade and deceive the believer in Jesus. He will parade before one’s eyes the kingdoms, lusts, and vanities of this world and whisper into your ear that you can have them. They are yours and will make you happy if...if you put aside those old, dusty, ancient commandments that no longer apply to you because they were written thousands of years ago! You’re more sophisticated now, more enlightened, and can do what you want. You can write your own rules to live by.

So come the temptations of the devil as he begs you to justify your actions, sinful as they may be, in many different ways. In short, when you follow the devil’s lies you are worshipping him and not the one true God.

What was Jesus’ response to the lie that the devil had the power to give Him the world, that it was his to give?

“Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’ ”

And there Jesus gives us another “mono”. Worship God and Him, only, alone,...mono.

As we begin this Lenten season, that is our goal now and always, to strive to worship God alone in word and deed...to tell the devil to get behind us and use God’s Word alone for our defense.

And in God's Word, we find relief and comfort for the many times that we have fallen.
Listen to **Hebrews 2:17-18**

"17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted."

Propitiation – atonement for our sins. God's Word is the Bread of Life for our souls!

When the paralytic was lowered through the roof by his friends to receive healing from Jesus, what did Jesus do first?

"He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."

21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Who alone? Who only? Who mono? There is our word again...can forgive sins but God? And He does freely and graciously through the blood of Jesus!

What does our epistle from Romans 10 say to us?

"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach) 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

What is near you? The powerful lifegiving word of the Gospel of Jesus...that believing in Him you will be saved. For Jesus never failed. Not once did He give into temptation. So that He was the perfect sacrifice for our sins. And He rose from the dead to prove that He conquered the sin, death and the devil!

So continues our epistle:

"Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him."

Jesus is rich in His love and forgiveness. No shame at all for all of us who have fallen to temptation.

Oh, listen to the good news we hear from Romans 4, speaking of the faith given to Abraham.

“22 And therefore “it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, 24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”

God’s salvation is for all, for Abraham and for the Jews and the Gentiles. (Romans 3:29)
“Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,”

Like the Centurion, we say, **in Matt 8:8**

“Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.”

Only say the word, Your word alone, **mono**, gives healing to the body and soul. As Luther wrote in his hymn “A Mighty Fortress”, one little word can fell him. One little word of the Gospel can fell him. God’s powerful word is your sure defense.

So, I ask you again. Are you alone in your battle against the devil?

And we answer with Paul in Romans 8, **“If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”**

God the Father didn’t spare His Son, but led Him to be tempted in every way, but never sinned.

“15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace.” Hebrews 4:15-16

Amen

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)