**Matthew 4:1-11**

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. **2** And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. **3** And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” **4** But he answered, “It is written, “ ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ” **5**  Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple **6** and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “ ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “ ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’ ” **7** Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ” **8**  Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. **9** And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” **10** Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “ ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’ ” **11** Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

**“The Right Side Of History”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. If you were in church on Ash Wednesday, you heard what God echoed to our first parents back in the Garden. He said, “…for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” I remember someone years back showed disgust against the Bible because it has so many horrible stories. From one perspective, they were right. God’s Word does not put a positive spin on humanity. Now plenty attempt to revise history to their liking, while others today opt flat out to ignore it. Yet, going back to the Garden shows the defeat of humanity by the devil. Long before any horrible stories ever arose in history, this sad outcome glares at us right from the start.

However, God turned defeat and whatever horrible history of humanity to a better promise. His Word put enmity or separation between the woman and the Devil. Luther boasted over this in the third verse of A Mighty Fortress Is Our God saying, “Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us, we tremble not, we fear no ill; They shall not overpower us. This world’s prince may still scowl fierce as he will, he can harm us none. He’ judged; the deed is done; one little word can fell him.” Of course, this is the “little word” who faced off in the wilderness with The Tempter. The wrong side of history is the failure of humanity, but Christ by His obedience has defeated the Devil so the right side of history rests for us in Him.

1. **On the wrong side of history stands the disobedience of humanity against God.**
2. Doubt is what comes naturally to us now in a sinful world.

* The Devil’s toxic question, “Did God really say?” has seeped into the heart of all people spoiling trust in God and His Word.
* To question everything today is less about learning and more a cause to accuse our neighbor or even reject what is good.
* Doubt festers beneath the surface of what we see with a dependence that is only able to trust in self.

1. Rebellion has been unleashed because the Law has made its judgment against us.

* When Adam and Eve bought into that lie, “you will not die.” Humanity tries to keep up that utopian dream.
* The Devil stokes the rage portraying God as our enemy when the facts fall back on us. St. Paul says, “...death spread to all men because all sinned.”
* Once unruliness runs out, it ends up at last despairing over life, putting it to poor use, or turning life into a cheap thing.

1. Denial is the default answer when sinners want to be god.

* The Devil gave a false promise that humanity still wishes was true saying, “You will be like God.”
* It has led to every kind of idolatry imaginable with gods made in our image, as we adore their glory.
* In our individualized world today, we go advance beyond worship of creation, but finally worship what we create.

Fortunately, the sad history of man and our lives of doubt, rebellion and denial has a different perspective from God’s side of things. “For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”

1. **On the right side of history stands the obedience of Jesus who defeated the Devil so refuge is for any in Him.**
2. Even before facing The Tempter of humanity, Jesus was already in the wilderness and even hungry.

* The devil did not will this plan, but the Holy Spirit put God’s Son into this position of suffering after His baptism.
* Rather than having an edge, Jesus handed Himself over to humility becoming vulnerable to bodily need no less than anyone else.
* As the book of Hebrews tells us He, “…in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (4:15).
* A sinful world filled with doubt from grief and the failure of sinners has met the faithfulness of God’s Son who does not falter.

1. It was an unfair match when it came to the Devil’s tempting, since Christ came to win by the way of His cross.

* Rather than bread for Himself, Jesus was sent to feed us saying, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” (John 6:35).
* Jesus did not come to show off or rebel as God’s Son, but to do the will of His Father. Suffering and death was to be a free gift that put His life to good use for sinners.
* Even at His sacrifice, to rule in your favor meant for Him to deny the riotous crowd’s demands, “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross. (Matt 27:40)
* Unlike the Devil who is rash and careless, everything by Jesus is calculated with compassion, forgiveness, and love as the Savior.

1. The Devil always overreaches, because he wants to be god and our comfort is that Christ will have none of it.

* Before even quoting Scripture, Jesus by His own authority removes the disgrace before Him saying, “Be Gone! Satan!”
* Christ truly worshiped and served His Father with perfect obedience, which by the cross has now created righteousness that silences Satan.
* There is no other worship than what we receive and praise around Word and Sacrament for there is Jesus. He has made the promise, “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:23).
* Any time these gift are at work, be certain you are not on the wrong side of history, because you rightly have Christ covering your sin, reigning over death with His life, and shaming the Devil all for you.

The first Sunday in Lent shows how Satan tries to derail Christ off course. It is to make His identity as God’s Son different from His mission to be the Savior of a sinful world. Satan, our adversary, tempts to sidetrack us not simply into sin, but to miss our identity as God’s baptized children. Lent more than repentance, is about identity and living that out now with Christ. The valiant one walks with us in the wilderness of this world able to bring us to the glory of His kingdom that has no end. The wrong side of history is the failure of humanity, but Christ by His obedience has defeated the Devil so the right side of history rests for us in Him. Amen. Now the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.