

Luke 4:1-13

Lent 1; March 10, 2019

At some time or another, we've probably all assumed an identity not our own. As children, most of us have played the part of someone else. I think we've all pretended to be policemen, firemen, doctors, nurses, teachers, builders, NBA player, NFL players and superheroes. Some have acted in plays or transformed into a favorite character for a costume party. Pretending to be someone else for an evening can be fun. However, there is always the understanding that tomorrow will come, and we'll go back to being ourselves. This morning, Luke wants us to open our eyes to a much different type, and much more serious, loss of identity. When Satan tempts Jesus, he is trying to get Jesus to forget who he was. When Satan tempts us, he is trying to get us to forget who we are. Let's see the life-changing truth that Jesus wants to teach us through the temptations of Satan.

There are two ways to think about what is happening when someone is tempted. The first is to imagine temptation as ENTICEMENT TOWARD something bad and wrong. There is nothing wrong in looking at temptations in that direction. But there is another way of thinking about it. Temptation could also be seen as ENCOURAGEMENT AWAY from something good and right. As we begin Lent, we begin with an opportunity to look Jesus' temptation, and the second way might be more helpful when looking at this text. Let me explain.

In two of the three temptations records in these verses, Satan asks a question of Jesus: **"If you are the Son of God..."** Did Satan know who Jesus was? Yes! Did Jesus know who he was and who Satan was? Yes. After all, Satan had gone to war with God. The Apostle John describes this war in the book of Revelation: **"And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down — that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him."** (Rev. 12:7-9) Ever since that day that Satan was thrown down from heaven, he wanted to ruin everything that God had done right. Like a well-trained army, he succeeded at his mission. Adam and Eve lost God's perfect world. Sin came with a price. **"For the wages of sin is death."**

But God had a plan to once again make right what Satan had made so wrong. He would send His Son. As you look at the verses before our text, you can see that Luke wanted his readers to know who Jesus was. There was NO DOUBT that he was the Son of God. At Jesus' Baptism, the Father spoke about him: **"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."** Then Luke inserts His genealogy which goes all the way back to the beginning. Jesus is not only the son of Joseph, and the son of David, and the son of Abraham. He is also **"the son of Adam, the son of God."** (Luke 3:38) It is as if Luke wants to be crystal clear about Jesus' identity before he tells us about His temptation.

So, the battle begins. Satan really has only one goal through these temptations and others. He wants Jesus to forget who He is. If Jesus forgets who He is, and what He has come to accomplish, Satan can win the war. The Father had just declared at Jesus' baptism: **"You are my Son."** Throughout Jesus' entire life, Satan had been trying to pick away at Jesus' SONSHIP. Here Luke records just three of the many temptations that Satan had thrown at Jesus. *1. Turn stones into bread. 2. Rule the world. 3. Trust that the angels would protect Jesus.* Three things that in and of themselves are not necessarily bad. Eating is good. God ruling the world. Trusting in God's protection. Not bad things. But these came with a catch. They are invitations to be somebody else, to live a life other than that of the Son of God. The Devil wanted to change the plan that God had come up with. If Jesus does these three things, he no longer trusts His Heavenly Father. In fact, he does the very same thing that Satan had done with God. He will be leading Jesus away from his mission and God's promises. But Jesus does not forget who he is – the Son of God.

Satan tries to do the same thing to us through the temptations that he throws at us. He wants to change the script of God's story. So what does he do? He knows our weaknesses. If our weakness is worrying, he will give us all kinds of things to worry about. If it is getting angry, he will place all kinds of obstacles in our path to get angry about. You see the Devil will make all kinds of promises to us that he can't deliver upon. He could not deliver on any of the promises that he was trying to make in these temptations. He didn't create and sustain the world. It wasn't his world to give away. He was trying to get the Son to demand an action that only benefited the Son. Satan really is saying to Jesus: *Bow to me, and I will be your God.* Satan was trying to get the Son to orphan himself from the Father.

The Devil's purpose in tempting us is not to get us to DO things that we aren't supposed to do. He wants us to BE someone we are not. He doesn't want us to trust that we are sons and daughters of our God. He wants us to throw away that relationship we have with our heavenly Father through faith in Jesus. He really wants to orphan us from God. That's what temptation is. He wants to draw us AWAY from everything that is good and right. He really is saying to us: *Bow to me, and I will be your God.* It's not any different from the temptations that Adam, Eve and Jesus faced.

How do we stand up to that temptation? We don't. But we have something better. We have Jesus. Jesus saw right through those temptations. For 33 years, he didn't run from the war. He never doubted the plan and care of his Father. Again and again, Jesus used his Father's Word as the tool to defeat the Devil. He gives us the same tool. Isn't it remarkable that Jesus speaks to us every single week through His Word? Isn't it enough of a wonder that the Spirit speaks to those who are spiritually dead whenever his Word is preached every week? Isn't it a wonder to see a person become a child of God through the waters of baptism? Isn't it a miracle that Jesus gives us his body and his blood through the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper? Yet, that's what Jesus does. Week after week, year after year, Jesus reminds us as to who we are. We are his children. We have his promises. Don't just take my word on it. Take his.

This world does not need another superhero to defeat the Devil. We need the Jesus who is starving, dehydrated and beat up in the desert. We need the Savior whose hands and feet have the nail holes in them. We need the Savior who died but did not stay in the tomb by rising back to life. We need the Savior who has ascended to heaven and is ruling all things for us. We need Jesus. His identity is our identity. Amen.