

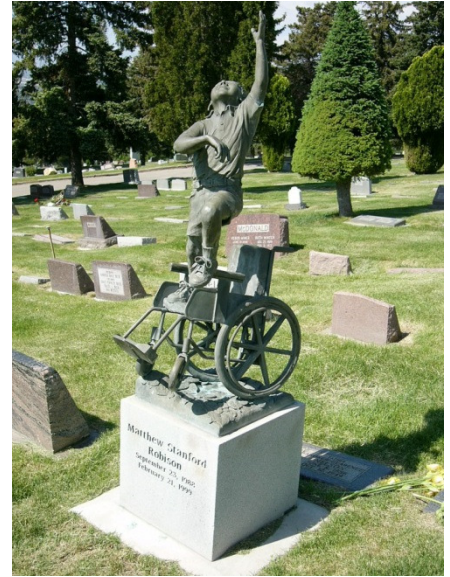
Mark 1:12-15

Lent 1; February 18, 2018

You don't usually travel to a cemetery to be inspired. However, if you go to the Salt Lake City Cemetery in Utah, you will find a unique and stirring tombstone. You cannot look at this particular tombstone and not have an emotional reaction. You are drawn to it. You want to know the story behind it. ... Yet, at the same time, as soon as you see it, you know the story.

The story is of Matthew Robison, the son of Ernest and Anneke Robison. Due to a lack of oxygen during birth, Matthew was born with many disabilities. He was blind, mostly paralyzed, and could only say a few words. He was confined to his bed and wheelchair for most of his young life. Matthew died at the tender age of 10.

That sounds like a truly sad and tragic story. But it isn't. Matthew died, but he died with faith in Jesus. Matthew's dad wanted to express the hardships and difficulties of his son's life, while at the same time expressing the joy and excitement that Matthew is now enjoying in heaven on account of His Savior.



The tombstone that Ernest designed for his son is a sculpture of a boy standing on the arm of his wheelchair reaching for the sky. Matthew is no longer blind. He can see. He is no longer lame. He is leaping out of his wheelchair. He is no longer mute. His voice is joining with the saints and angels in singing praises to His Savior and King. His Savior rescued him.

Maybe we can understand the frustrations that little Matthew experienced in life. There are so many things that can pile on top of us. The struggle to find a job. The doctor's diagnosis of cancer. The couple who are going through the pains of divorce. The unexpected death in a family. There are situations that seem to suck the joy out of life.

And if that weren't hard enough, we daily face the Devil who has declared war on us. A battle that began in the garden of Eden. In a perfect paradise given to Adam and Eve from a loving God, they fell into Satan's trap. They ate of the fruit of the tree that God had told them not to eat. As a result, death came into this world.

Every day we get up and try to battle with Satan. Every day we think we can win. Yet, we are no match for Satan. He comes at us again and again; and again and again we fail. Yes, there are days that we seem to do better. There are days like Abraham had in our first lesson. We are willing to give up everything for our God. We trust that he will provide the lamb. We know the words of the Apostle Paul: **"If God is for us, who can be against us?"** We don't always trust those words. We think we know better. It is then that we fail even more. The attacks from Satan don't stop. He is good. He has a way of making those awful things look so good, doesn't he?

We all too often feel like Jesus did in the wilderness. We feel beaten. We feel parched. We feel weak. On our own, we don't stand a chance against Satan. From almost the beginning of the world, Satan has gotten his way. No one has been able to stand up against him.

But then Jesus came. There was a man who caught Satan's full attention. Jesus had just been baptized, and received the full approval of the Father. For 30 years, Jesus did not sin. Satan wants to change this. It's now crunch time. He will go after Jesus with everything.



So, what happens? **"At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals."** The spirit throws Jesus out into the wilderness with Satan and wild

animals. Why would the spirit do that? That's why Jesus came into this world. It was time to accomplish everything that God had promised. It was time for Jesus to take our place and defeat Satan.

Jesus could have taken the easy way out. He could have said: *I'm done. I'm out of here. I don't need this.* Who would have blamed him? You might even say that Jesus had every right to do it. What did he have to lose, but the souls of his enemies? Enemies that would scheme to kill him? Friends who would abandon him? We, who would disobey and defy him every day? It would have been so easy to walk away.

What does Jesus do? That wasn't God's plan. His plan was to be our substitute. His plan was to walk a painful and spiritual death all alone on a cross. God's plan was to suffer in ways that we can't even imagine. God's plan was to shed his blood so that we would never have to face what Jesus faced in the wilderness. He did this without hesitation. His plan was to wash the sins of this world away in his blood.

Satan doesn't want you to know that you have already won the battle against him. You don't have to worry about that crushing weight of the guilt of sin. You don't have to worry about all those struggles that you are going through. You don't have to try to leap up to heaven because you can't do it;'
894+ . But Jesus did. Through Jesus, you have already won! Amen.