

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent**  
**March 13, 2011**

Matthew 4:1-11 "Whose Word Are You Willing to Take?"

Last week we heard that we can trust God's Word just as it has come down to us from the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles and evangelists of the New Testament. This Word we have learned to trust as a guide for our lives is the same Word that Jesus depended upon in order to keep perfectly God's Commandments for us. And since we are at the end of Lutheran Schools Week, it is good to remember that it is also the same Word which is such an important part of our education at St. Paul's Lutheran School, along with the core subjects.

But God's Word is not the only word around that people hear. There is also the word of a fallen and sinful world. Its chief spokesman is Satan. This word is always working to snuff out the new life we have in us through Jesus Christ and his Word.

So the question before us today is, "Whose word are you willing to take?"

The first word concerns how we receive God's Word. Through Satan, the world says, "Doubt it." In the Old Testament reading today, Satan quizzed Eve about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil from which they were commanded not to eat. The devil told them that they would not die if Adam and Eve ate from it. He said that they could become wise like God. He says they would know the difference between good and evil.

Up until then, Adam and Eve always did the right thing. They made good choices. They did not sin. That's the way God created them. They kept the 10 commandments perfectly, and so they were living holy, perfect, righteous, good lives. They never did anything wrong. Wouldn't it be great if we could say the same thing about ourselves? But we cannot since sin came into the world through Adam and Eve. When Adam and Eve began to doubt God's Word and the commandment, they ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They doubted God.

What kinds of things do you have trouble believing?

In the Gospel reading today, Satan tries to get Jesus to doubt that God will take care of him. Jesus has been fasting in the wilderness for forty days and nights, and he is hungry. There was nothing in the wilderness to eat. There were no McDonalds, Chick-fil-A's, or Burger Kings. There was nothing to cook, nor was there anything to just pick and eat. God's Spirit led Jesus out in the wilderness, but there was no food, and Jesus was hungry. So the devil reminds Jesus that since he is hungry, and he thinks he is God's Son, then he should change some stones into loaves of bread. Then he will have food and would no longer be hungry. But Satan was trying to get Jesus to doubt that God would take care of him.

Jesus may have been physically hungry, but he was not spiritually hungry. He knew God would take care of him. He may have needed food for his belly, but he did have food for his soul. He had God's Word that encouraged him during his days of fasting. Jesus responds to the devil, saying, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

God's Word is what is so important for us and the reason why we come to church. We need the reminder of God's promises in God's Word that he will provide for our every need, that he will never leave or forsake us, and that we are God's dear children. We can trust God's Word is the truth for us. It tells us that we have a Savior, Jesus Christ, who has come to break the power of our enemy, the devil. He was willing to take the blow for us at the cross when he took our sins upon himself there. Jesus knew how important it was that he be obedient to all God's commandments, and that meant that he could trust God, even though he was hungry. We also need to trust God and his Word.

Satan's first word says to doubt it, but experience and knowledge teach us to trust God's Word instead. When Jesus did not fall for Satan's trap, the devil was ready with another temptation. Through Satan the world says, "Misuse it." The devil is very good at misusing God's Word. When tempting Adam and Eve, the devil asked them, "Did God really say you couldn't eat from any tree in the garden?" That was not a true statement. God had only singled out one tree from which Adam and Eve were not to eat. They were permitted to eat from any tree in the garden except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. As long as Adam and Eve kept this commandment, it was an act of worship. However, Eve began to go along with the lie when she said they weren't even supposed to touch the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which God had never said.

How easy it can be to misuse God's Word. People often do this, just as we heard in Pastor Black's message last week. People will quote verses out of context to defend sin or discredit the Bible. This is one of the devil's tricks. Take for example how the devil misquoted God's Word to Jesus. He told Jesus to throw himself off the highest point of the temple, and he said that God would not allow even his foot to stumble. Instead, angels would catch him. It would make a wonderful show for people and Jesus would become very popular.

God tells us to use his Word properly. Jesus understood this. The devil meant it as a temptation to cause Jesus to seek greatness for himself. However, if Jesus followed through on this and jumped off the highest place of the temple, he would be testing God to help him. God certainly wanted to keep Jesus safe, but he could not give in to such trickery. God might protect and catch Jesus, but Jesus would have crossed the line and misused God's Word.

We must also be careful to use God's Word properly. When reading God's Word, we should read the other verses around a single verse in God's Word so that we understand the context of what is written.

The third word concerns how we live out God's Word in obedience. Through Satan the world says, "Disobey it." The devil put a choice before Jesus. The devil thought Jesus was seeking political greatness for himself. He thought that Jesus was only interested in being a great leader, exercising control, ruling the world. Jesus could keep going on the path of suffering to the cross, or he could take a shortcut to greatness. The devil told Jesus that if Jesus would worship him, the devil would give him all the kingdoms of the world for himself.

There's another time Satan tried to get Jesus to turn away from suffering and the cross. When Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane before his death, he asked God, if it was his will, to take the cup of suffering for our sins away from him. However, God loves us so much, and he loved Jesus so much, that it was God's will that Jesus die on the cross for the world's sins. Jesus willingly obeyed God's Word, and he did not do what the devil wanted.

God says to us today, "Submit to God's Word." God's Word teaches us, first and foremost, that we are to worship no one but God. There is no one greater than the one who created the world, the one who died for the sins of the world, the one that gives to us the gifts of forgiveness and life through the message of Jesus Christ and the cross. Jesus willingly submitted to God's Word. He would serve only God. He would be the obedient Son of God.

We submit to God and his Word, too, like Jesus. This is why in our baptism services we renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways. Only God is to be worshipped. God is the one who sent his Son so that we can live with God forever in heaven through the forgiveness of sins. Jesus submitted to the Father's will so that we can live, and we do well to be obedient to God and his Word, too.

So whose word will you choose to take – the devil's word or God's Word? We will follow God's Word, because in it we learn about God's love and forgiveness for us through Jesus Christ. We can trust that God's Word is always going to be good news for us.

*soli deo gloria*