**Let God be God**

Based on [Matthew 4:1-11](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt4.1-11)

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The First Sunday in Lent ~ Invocabit

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St Paul says that the last enemy to be defeated by Christ is death. We can look forward to heaven where we do not have death looming around us. Until that day, we live in the invisible kingdom of grace. I do not mean that Christ does nothing visibly for us now. He does. He gives us grace, blessing and promise. This is done through such ordinary means as water, bread, wine, a pastor, a congregation of saints. Christ blesses us with our vocations , roles to play in the family and in society where we are a to be a lamp of his word and works to those around us. We see christ in these things by faith, not by sight.

But, when we attain to that glory where faith becomes sight...O happy day. Not only will we be free from all death and suffering; but we will no longer have to deal with temptation. Temptations to sin are sure to come. They are stirred up in us by the Tempter himself. Notice how Jesus is sent out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil ***immediately after*** he is baptized. Immediately after Jesus is commissioned by God to do His work, he is tempted. We have been baptized, and called to walk in the newness of life through Christ. But that baptism is not an immunity from temptation for us any more than it was for Christ. Temptations are sure to come, as is shown in Christ’s own example in the wilderness, and from today’s gospel we can learn the nature of temptation, who is behind it, and how to respond.

In the first temptation, Jesus is tempted to provide for himself and ignore God. Jesus is hungry, and so the devil reasonably encourages him to make bread. Wouldn’t you make bread if you were hungry? Is there anything sinful about making bread? We are taught to pray that God would give us daily bread. And the curse from the garden to Adam was that from the sweat of his brow he was to eat bread. What’s wrong with tempting Jesus to make bread?

Jesus was sent in humility, in the form of a servant. He was not commissioned to use his power to save himself or fill his belly, and to do so would be an abuse of that power. An example…say you are given a handicapped parking pass to drive a disabled person to where he needs to be. You have the power to park places others cannot. It is a privilege for a purpose, and that’s fine. But what if the disabled person is not with you on a particular outing? Do you still park in a handicapped space? It technically isn’t even illegal and it would make your life a little easier. And it seems like such a little thing.

Turning stones to bread is such a little thing for the Son of God. But he doesn’t do it. Jesus was given a job to do; he was sent with a singular purpose. He was to fulfill all righteousness and he has the guidance and authority of his Father insofar as he completes his mission. He could give the blind sight and make the lame walk was not to use his messianic powers to help himself. He came to save others, but he trusts in God to save him. And His Father does not forsake him in this, but so that the urgency of the temptation proves false, when it’s over he sends angels in the end to minister to him.

The second temptation is like the opposite of the first. This time, Jesus is taken to the top of the temple and encouraged to throw himself off, because God promises in his word to protect him.

This shows just how shrewd the devil, the crafty serpent really is. He’s a good listener. He listened to Jesus’ argument against the first temptation…”I don’t need to fear for my welfare, God will provide for me bread should I need it. What is most important is that I keep his word.” So the devil says “Yesss, that’s it. God will provide and protect you and you do need to keep his word. His word says he will send his angels to protect you. Keep his word. Show that you fully trust God to protect you. Throw yourself off of this temple.”

You see...on the first try the devil tempts Jesus to act as though God won’t provide. On the second, he goes the other way, and tempts Jesus to act as though God will provide no matter what he does.

This is a common way to twist God’s word, by pitting it against faith. It’s like if someone decided to be fed without working for food, but to expect the fruits of the earth by *faith*. Or if you decided to expect a house by *faith*, a car by *faith*, a wages by *faith*, a good reputation by *faith*, without having to do any work in the matter and throwing all caution to the wind. It’s like the man in a flood who sent away rescuers because he had *faith* that ***God*** would save him. Do not put the Lord your God to the test. Believe his promises, do not sin to get what you need, but don’t neglect the natural ordering of His creation either.

So let’s review: Temptation 1: God won’t help, so you better help yourself. Temptation 2: God will help, so you don’t need to help yourself. Next comes Temptation 3: Become like God; and you don’t have to worry whether he will help or not.

The third temptation is really the most crass, and is fitting for a last-ditch effort of the devil. It is simply a rehashing of the first temptation of Eve...that if she ate, she would become powerful like God. So Satan tries once again the tack that worked so well against the woman. He tries it on Jesus Christ. Only instead of eating a fruit, the devil uses no such disguise for what he’s really asking...bow down and worship me.

There is a gap of understanding between God’s ways and our ways. We know that the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God stronger than men. We know his ways are inscrutable to our provincial understanding. This is why we are to manage temptation, not by exalting our own understanding, but through humbling ourselves before the Word. **Trust in the Word of the Lord, and lean not on your own understanding**. The devil tries to reason Jesus to an understanding apart from the Word, but Jesus returns to it. We are not to distrust God, nor trust him beyond his promises. Neither are we to seek to be like him in matters too great for us. We are to be still and let God be God, and wait patiently for his deliverance from all evil. This is what Jesus does, and what we are called to do. This is the the way out of temptation that the lord provides.