

Around our family dinner table, Luke and James like to sing a song that we learned in VBS last year. The song is called, “In Jesus the Victory’s Won.” Well today we are going to see that **Jesus has won the Victory over Satan. I. He resisted temptation in our place. And II. He helps us when we are tempted.**

First, he resisted temptation in our place. Our Gospel begins, “**At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan.**” (Mark 1:12-13). God sent Jesus out to be tempted by Satan in order to reverse or to fix what Satan did in the Garden of Eden. In the Garden of Eden, God told Adam and Eve, “Do not eat from this tree. If you eat from this tree you will surely die.” But Satan came and tempted Adam and Eve and they disobeyed God. How is God going to fix that? How is God going to undo what Satan did in the Garden of Eden? He going to fix what Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden by sending Jesus out to be tempted by Satan and this time Satan didn’t win. That’s how God reversed or fixed what Satan did in the Garden of Eden. You see Jesus is our substitute. Jesus was tempted in our place as our substitute. We have failed and given in to Satan’s temptations, but Jesus didn’t. And since Jesus is our substitute, his perfect obedience counts for us.

In this passage, Jesus and Satan are doing battle. But notice that even though Jesus and Satan are doing battle, they are not having a boxing match. They are not physically fighting. The reason for that is that Satan did not defeat us by physically overpowering us. Satan defeated us by tempting us, by persuading us to disobey God. And so Jesus needed to defeat the devil not by physically overpowering him but by withstanding his temptations. The devil defeated us not by physically overpowering us but by persuading us to disobey God. Every time we make a rationalization for our sins, every time we say something to the effect of, “Yeah, I know this is wrong but I have to do it because of this or this.” Every time we make a rationalization for our sins, Satan has persuaded us to disobey God. We need to repent of rationalizations and look in faith to Jesus who withstood temptation in our place. Jesus was tempted for forty days. For forty long days Satan tried everything he could to try to persuade Jesus to sin and Jesus was not persuaded to sin, not even once. He did that in our place and his perfect obedience counts for us.

The fact that Jesus never gave in to temptation is all the more remarkable when we consider the harsh surroundings that Jesus was in. Sometimes art of the reason we fall into sin is because of our surroundings or our circumstances. For example, maybe we are really stressed at work and that causes us to lash out with angry words at an innocent bystander like our spouse. That’s not an excuse. Stress at work is no excuse for lashing out at your spouse. It’s something Jesus needed to redeem you for. Jesus needed to redeem us for the times that we have sinned under stressful circumstances and so when Jesus was tempted he was under terrible circumstances. He was in the desert with the sun beating down on him every day for forty days. Matthew tells us that Jesus did not eat when he was in the desert. He was hungry. He was also lonely. 40 days is a very long time. Can you imagine going more than a month without talking to another human being. On top of that, Mark adds a detail that Matthew and Luke don’t tell us about. Mark tells us that Jesus was “**with the wild animals**” (Mark 1:13). That would be very frightening. Can you imagine Jesus at night hearing the sounds of the coyotes or whatever animals are out there? Jesus is under terrible circumstances and the devil is trying so hard to get Jesus to sin. And Jesus doesn’t crack. He doesn’t give in to temptation not even once. What a Champion! Jesus won the victory and did not give in to the devil’s temptations.

Now there are two things we need to do to receive the benefits of Jesus’ victory over Satan: we need to repent and believe the good news. Of course we realize that repentance and faith are things that the Holy Spirit works in us through God’s Word and so we can’t even take credit for these two things. But for us to receive the benefits of Jesus’ victory we need to repent and believe the Good News. Our lesson says, “**After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said, ‘The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news’**” (Mark 1:14-15).

**“To repent”** means “to change your mind.” Satan persuaded you to disobey God, but you change your mind, you repent. Repentance means to genuinely regret your sin. Repentance means to say, “I wish would not have done that.” Sometime people say, “Well, I’ll commit this sin and then I’ll just repent for it later.” That’s not repentance. Repentance means to genuinely regret what you have done. But once we genuinely regret what we have done, Jesus says, “Believe the good news.” The world that Jesus uses for Good News was often used of military victories. “Good news” we won the war. The people who were trying to attack us have been defeated. For example in Isaiah it says, **“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news ... Who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isaiah 52:7)** Jesus wants us to believe that good news that he has defeated Satan. And through faith in Jesus his victory is our victory. In Jesus the Victory is won. Jesus defeated Satan and now Satan doesn’t reign over us. God reigns over us. So the first thing I wanted to talk to you about today is that Jesus won over the devil by resisting temptation in our place. The second thing I want to talk to you about is that Jesus helps us when we are tempted.

Satan’s temptations are much more numerous and subtle than we often realize. As I was reading in preparation for this sermon I came across this quote that I’ll share with you: **We need to recognize how much temptation we experience. “We are tempted by pride when we do well and by envy and resentment when we do poorly. We are tempted by prosperity to forget God and by adversity to mistrust him. We are tempted by friends and enemies, pains and pleasures. Whether strong or weak, obvious or subtle, temptation is our frequent companion.”**<sup>1</sup> Satan’s temptations are very subtle, sometimes Satan can even use good things to tempt us. A good example of this was in our first lesson. That first lesson is very hard to read. But God was never going to make Abraham sacrifice his son and we see that from the end of the story. God stops him. So God was never going to make Abraham sacrifice his son. Instead, God was testing Abraham by forcing him to think, “Who do I love more? Do I love my son more or do I love God more?” And Abraham passed the test. He loved God more. He loved God even more than he loved his son. But I’m sure Satan was tempting Abraham the whole time: “Love your son more.” I was having morning devotion with my sons Luke and James on Friday morning and I read the temptation of Jesus out of Luke’s Bible Story book and I asked Luke, “Do you love God more or do you love your toys more?” And he said, “I love my toys more.” And I said, “No, love God more.” And I told him, “I’m your dad and I want you to love me. But I want you to love God more than you love me.” I love my sons a great deal but I love God even more. And one the reasons I love God more is that God gave his beloved Son so my sons and my wife and I all of you can live. God told Adam and Eve, if you eat the fruit of this tree you will surely die. But God gave his own beloved Son into death so that we could have eternal life. Remembering what God has done for us **helps us when we are tempted.** When we remember what God did for us, that makes us love God. And when we love God we want to keep his commandments. When we love God we don’t want to give in to temptation. And another way that God has promised to help us when we are tempted is that he has promised to always be with us to guard and protect us when we are tempted. There’s a petition in the Lord’s Prayer which says, “Lead us not into temptation.” And Martin Luther explains it in the Small Catechism: **“Lead us not into temptation.” What does this mean? “God surely tempts no one to sin, but we pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or lead us into false belief, despair and other great and shameful sins; and though we are tempted by them, we pray that we may overcome and win the victory!”** In Jesus the victory is won. He won the victory over Satan by withstanding his temptations in our place and he’ll be with us to help us win the victory in our temptations. And when we fall, he’ll be there to pick us back up and point us to his greatest triumph over Satan when he died on the cross to forgive us for all of our sins. In Jesus the victory’s won. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> MLC Professor Joel Fredrich, commenting on the petition of the Lord’s Prayer, “Lead us not into temptation.” Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, volume 107, page 278.