

Sunday, February 22, 2026 - First Sunday in Lent

The First Reading tells the story of Adam and Eve's yielding to temptation.

The Gospel tells the story of Jesus' resisting temptation.

The Second Reading tells of the differing results for us of what Adam did versus what Jesus did.

First Reading: Genesis 3:1-7

There were three things that Satan did to deceive Adam and Eve.

When and how has Satan used the same three tactics against you?

He got them to question whether God means what He says.

1-3 – The serpent said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'"

He got them to question whether what God says is true.

4 – The serpent said to the woman, "You will not die."

He got them to question whether God intends the best for them.

5 – "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11

1-2 – Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished.

Mark 1: 12 – The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.

Luke 4: 1 – Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness.

The Spirit who led Jesus in or into the wilderness may also lead you in or into the wilderness. When has the Spirit led you in or into the wilderness?

The devil attacked Jesus at a point of weakness – at a time of great vulnerability.

The devil also knows your points of weakness – your times of greatest vulnerability.

3-4 – The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

The devil attacked Jesus at His sense of self-identity.

He wanted to get Jesus to question whether He truly is the Son of God.

The devil will also try to get you to question whether you are a child of God.

The devil is jealous of your identity as a child of God, so he will attack you there.

He will attack your self-identity, your self-image, your self-confidence.

The devil was also tempting Jesus to handle and resist temptation using a resource and a power that would not be available to us – to turn stones into bread in order to satisfy His own hunger.

5-7 – Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil attacks Jesus by trying to get Him to question His identity as the Son of God. The devil is quoting Psalm 91: 11-12.

Here we see that the devil knows the Bible, though he will misquote and misuse the Bible. If the devil knows the Bible, then I had better know the Bible too, so that I will not be led astray.

8-10 - Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

The devil had no more right to lay claim to all the kingdoms of the world than I would have the right to try to sell you the Brooklyn Bridge. The devil could claim that right only as a thief. The devil was also tempting Jesus to choose the easy way and to avoid the way of the cross. When has the devil tempted you to choose the easy and/or less painful way? What was the result? Would the easy and/or less painful way have worked?

11 - Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Mark 1: 13 – He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. When have you experienced angels waiting on you after a time of temptation, sorrow, or other great difficulty?

Luke 4: 13 - When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

"Every test" – Jesus never knocked the bar off.

Jesus was able to face everything the tempter threw at him and never knocked the bar off. When was that "opportune time"? I believe in the Garden of Gethsemane, where again the devil tried to tempt Jesus to go the easier, less painful way and avoid the way of the cross.

Luke 22: 41-44 – Then he knelt down and prayed, "Father if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done." Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.

Hebrews 4: 15-16 – We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

When have you received mercy and found grace just at the right time and/or just in the nick of time in your time of need?

Second Reading: Romans 5:12-19

12 - Sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin.

15 - If the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many.

18 - Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all.