

THE LORD'S SERMONS

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Sermon 13

First Sunday in Lent

The Temptation of the Lord

St. Matthew IV, 1-11: Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. (NIV)

(January 21, 1872)

This chapter deals with My temptation through Satan when I walked on earth. The account of this temptation, as My disciples put it down in the Gospels, should not be taken literally for, naturally, Satan knew Me well and saw his Lord in Jesus. Therefore, it would not have been a temptation on his part to suggest that I turn stones into bread since he was well aware that I was capable of much more than that - or to suggest that I cast Myself from the pinnacle of the temple saying that nothing would happen to Me if I were the Son of God. It was he who carried Me through the air from the desert to these pinnacles knowing that I did not fully belong to this earth and that the gravity of this planet could not affect Me if I did not wish it.

Also, when he led Me onto a high mountain offering Me all the kingdoms My human eyes could detect from there, he still knew only too well that he could not offer his Lord and Creator the insignificant kingdoms of your dark earth,

not even the entire earth; for he was able - as no other spirit was - to survey My boundless creation with his spiritual eyes.

You can see that the *literal* interpretation of the passages, as they are given in the Gospel, cannot be the real explanation of these words. The meaning and significance of the temptation is quite different. These temptations - as described in the Gospel - may be temptations for *men* but never for the God and Creator of all finite things, even if He is in a human body.

In your world, if a student is preparing for an examination, he usually retires to a secluded place where he keeps on studying day and night. He renounces some worldly pleasures, be it food, drink or entertainment, so that - in the first case - his stomach may not gain too much influence over his mind or - in the other case - entertainment may not distract his mind which needs concentration during the studies.

That which every human being does who is preparing for an important step in his life, I did too.

When the time had come that I had to start My teaching ministry, namely, as a man in whose form My Deity was clad - I, too, had to concentrate, had to reduce the food for My body to an absolute minimum because My Spirit wanted to create spiritual and eternal things and did not wish to be impeded by matter.

My human being fasted whereas My spiritual being enjoyed an abundance of bliss, of which only a spiritual being is capable who is prepared to renounce all that is great and mighty within him and sacrifice himself out of love for the sake of the beings and spirits he has created.

In those moments all the human passions attacked Me. But only by becoming all man and by the Deity withdrawing into My innermost, was I able to set an example to My spirits of how to conquer and withstand all temptations. With this test I wanted to set an eternal example to all and make it clear to them that they could become My children only by conquering the mighty evil influences.

First it was hunger that assailed Me as a human being. That this was conquered is expressed in the words I spoke to Satan in response to his *first offer*: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." In other words: If fleshly desires attack a man's soul, let him think of these words, namely, that above all man's inner spiritual self has to be nourished, cared for and educated, even if it is at the cost of the body. What I said to Satan has this meaning for you: "Remember always that you have not been created to care for your body but to perfect your soul."

Satan's *second* metaphorically depicted attempt was to tempt the divine power within Me. In other words: A desire to boast with My divine attributes came over Me. This temptation may be likened to that when a person, gifted with great abilities and knowledge, even with divine powers and capable of accomplishing things that are denied to others and must appear to them like

miracles, boasts with such abilities instead of using them for the benefit of his fellowmen or the greater glory of the Giver .

Here applies My second reply to Satan: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God!" This means: "Do not succumb to the delusion that the Lord, even if He did give you power, might not take it away from you again if you do not use it for His ends but only for your own!" It would be raising oneself above one's own human abilities, misusing a divine gift the success of which would promote pride instead of humility. Satan tried to awaken My human conceit and thought I might raise Myself above this lowly station on which, in My opinion, depended the success of My great plan.

The *third* attempt was to arouse My lust for power. For these three mightiest of passions are latent in the human heart as a basis for all the others: the propensity for a life full of pleasures for the body; the desire to excel others, that is, to hold a socially splendid position which provides the means for the satisfaction of the first passion; and, finally, the mania to be able to command instead of obey, to be the first, the one who lays down laws for others whilst he has raised himself above all laws and feels exempt from adhering to any of them.

The answer to this third attempt by Satan was: "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written: Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." This means in other words: Away with this low passion of wanting to dominate others which includes all the other passions like arrogance, hate, vengeance, anger and retaliation. The spiritual element within man, which was placed in his heart by God, requires you to step down, to become the most insignificant, to want to serve all the others, - if one day you would like to be set over great things. You must completely relinquish your desire to subject others. You shall learn to obey, so that one day you may be able to command, but not command with word of judgment, but with love and patience. Only in this way will your command never appear harsh and will be strictly followed, because the one who obeys you realizes that all this is only for his best. Thus man serves his God and Lord and, following My example, he will achieve the best results in the smallest and most insignificant things.

Just as I, as a man, once had to fight My way through all the human passions which I, as the Creator, intentionally put into the human nature, you have to do the same if you want to follow Me. You have to fight the mighty urge for good living, subordinate all these pleasures to a higher goal freeing yourself from the shackles that impede the flight of your soul. You must ban conceit, - the foremost liar, since it depicts a nicer picture of yourselves than is true and excuses bents of the worst kind with sophisticated shrewdness. As a result, you often imagine yourselves more important and better than you actually are which, naturally, must hinder your progress.

Do not give yourselves credit for powers you do not possess. Look upon yourselves as weak and unworthy, so that you may be strengthened in your faith and trust in Me; then the third bad passion, the lust for power, will not take hold of you and render you slaves of yourselves. There is nothing worse

in the world than to have this conceited notion that you are better than others, and to be inclined to dodge any pressure of obedience, always climbing over the shoulders of others to where only the one is the master and all the others slaves. For, to command others quite different qualities are needed than are possessed by those who at the present time on your earth seek to govern their fellowmen. Look at Me! How do I govern? Is it through force, or through prompt punishment or relentless judgment of the fallen and erring? Do I govern through anger, revenge and punishment? Certainly not! As you know Me, you can see that I govern only with the help of My all-embracing love, that forgiveness is My first principle and that I do not persecute the one who may err without his fault, but indulgently put all the means in his path for his betterment.

All the evil, evident as such in the world, was not created by Me, but it is a product of men's misuse of their free will. As free beings they can do what they wish, but they alone are responsible for the consequences. As I have said before: There is but *one* truth, and he who sins against it has to experience the consequences of falsehood.

Thus this Gospel shows how I, as a man, notwithstanding My position of might, fought forcefully against the passions in order to demonstrate to you and all the spirits that the evil, which I suffer to be in the world, serves after all a good purpose -the soul's progress.

You shall serve God alone, and this you do only when you follow the great commandments of love which prompt you to control your flesh and fight against the evil mental traits of vanity and lust for power. Only through self-denial and resistance to these strong urges in your human nature will you one day, in My Kingdom, comprehend what it means to be set over great things or, what the phrase signifies: "He who humbles himself shall be exalted!"

You will come upon the same traits also in the beyond. The first - although not in a material but in a spiritual sense, that is, as a desire to know and comprehend everything. The other two will in the beyond be more prominent in you than here on earth. This you can see where Lucifer and his followers are concerned who, conscious of their power, lost their equilibrium, proceeded from meekness to presumption and then, as did Satan, wanted to dominate even Me.

In order to know the right measure of how and when one is allowed to use his power, in order to understand how much knowledge will be needed for a particular task and to realize that, even if one is set over great things in the beyond, one is still meant to be a servant also to the lowest being, these passions must be fought and conquered already in this trial life here, so that one will be able to control them in the other world when entrusted with greater powers.

For this reason, do heed My words! You do not even know half your mission, you know less than a third about your nature and have no idea whatsoever why it has been made as it is and not different. Your eyes still suffer from

cataract and the light of My wisdom is still unable to penetrate to your inner being. At most, a spark of love sometimes moves your heart and makes you suspect that there is still something higher and greater. But the moment this ray of light has illuminated the innermost ventricles of your heart, these three passions - selfishness, vanity and lust for power darken them once more. They whisper a thousand excuses into your ear: "Yes, but one cannot completely withdraw from the world!", "One cannot live like that!", "Well, that is how the world has been made!", and so on. All just excuses of indolence because all of you, although you are hearers of My Word, do not want to become doers.

Now in particular, when from one Sunday to the next My Gospel is explained to you as you have never before heard it explained, now I want to make you ponder on My coming to your earth, so that you may recognize - at least to a degree - its great significance and understand what it means: God, the Creator of all infinity, descended to your earth in the lowliest circumstances and suffered you, erring and blind created beings, to persecute, even crucify Him. He went through all the phases of your life and fought against the human passions in order to give a shining example to you and all the spirits for all times. He showed that if a person wants to be spiritually like Him he must respect the spiritual as the most important thing and subordinate everything else to it. Then, fighting against the most powerful passions, one can become worthy of serving also other spirits as a leader and helper, proving through one's actions that man does not live only by material, but above all by spiritual food. He showed that God should not be tempted in His grace and that, following His two commandments of love, one could lead himself and others to where He, the Father, has long wanted to have you, that is, to His Kingdom as His worthy children.

Amen.

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