

Jesus, the one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

We are tempted all the time, it feels like. We're tempted to cut corners on a project to save time and money. We're tempted to speed (raise hand) to save some time, if not money because I've learned that speeding is not good on gas, and speeding tickets are not cheap. We're tempted to skip church because we would rather stay in bed; to get frustrated if not angry with those who are terrible at listening to us so they cannot understand what we're saying; we get tempted to lash out at loved ones when they do not put the toilet seat down or gas up the car or shovel the driveway or whatever your pet peeves may be. We get tempted when we see sexy people around us; we are tempted when we see rich people with nice things and a lot of friends. So much in life tempts us. And honestly, knowing what I know about Jesus, it's strange to think that He's been tempted in every way that we have; I still don't think I comprehend that just yet.

But it's certain that He was tempted. The bible tells us so, and in today's reading, we see 3 of those temptations. We see Jesus, tempted just as were His ancestors. Satan, it seems, doesn't have a tonne of tricks up his sleeve, so he just recycles a lot of the same antics.

First on the line in Luke's account is bread. Jesus has been 40 days without food, and at that point I would be eating the sand or my fingernails. Anything, really. But Jesus, the persistent guy He is, has managed to push through hunger for that long, when Satan pops up and says make this rock into bread. I'm sure he knows that Jesus can do it, yet he wants Jesus to do it to prove that He's the Son of God, because why on earth would the Son of God have to suffer hunger?

A similar thought ran through the Israelites minds as they, the Chosen people, left luscious Egypt to wander in the desert. Their memories were short so they forgot what trials they endured, that God had saved them from; all they wanted was a hot pot of stew. But God, to

remind them of His love for them, provided manna in the wilderness, which they loved, and then despised.

Jesus proves Himself much less fickle. He is Israel reduced into one person. And in a way, He answers Satan's doubt of Him being the Son of God. But rather than taking His situation into His own hand and producing bread to prove it, He simply shows His identity by His faith, faith as only the true Son of God could have, trusting in and living by the Word of God.

A similar exchange happens when it comes to authority over the world. Satan "offers" it to Jesus if only He'd bow down at the devil's feet. Jesus wouldn't be the first; He wouldn't even be the first of the Israelites to do it. Each person before Him, all the way to Adam and Eve, have heeded Satan's advice on how to become like God and they took it. Adam and Eve ate the fruit to become like God; the Israelites formed idols which they could control, making gods which they could serve so that they would in turn be served. Unfortunately you and I aren't much different.

But Christ is. He knew that the authority was already properly His, so taking it wouldn't be all that out of place, but He also knew whom all worship and praise and faith belongs. That is God's alone, and Christ, again, demonstrating perfect faith and trust, withheld where all before Him faltered.

Now in one last attempt of the day, Satan pulls out the big guns, the very word of God to tempt Christ—surely if you are the Son of God, nothing would happen to you if you took a leap off of this building? This wouldn't be the first time that someone had demanded God prove Himself, and it certainly wouldn't be the last. And after all, if God promised His angels would protect you, then what's the big deal?

Well, Christ persisted in His faith, trusting even without such a big demonstration of God's power. He didn't need God to prove Himself; He would simply trust. Christ's knowledge of the Word of God kept Him from falling in the same trap of weak faith that the Israelites before Him stumbled into. Certainly Christ trusted in God, but He knew that there were enough dangers around Him at all times—especially in this perilous moment—that He didn't need to create this superficial disaster in order to know God loved Him and cared for Him—that He was being protected from Satan was in and of itself a great sign that Christ is cared for.

Each of these temptations was an attempt to weaken Christ's trust in God, to steal away from Him His identity as the Son of God. If Satan could cause Christ to doubt, stumble, and ultimately to display His glory and power and authority before the time of the cross, then Satan would win and God, and us, would lose.

But that wasn't happening on Christ's watch—His faith was impenetrable and His hope unshakable. And this would remain true the entirety of His life. When He didn't have a place to rest His head, He didn't doubt that He was truly the Son of God, well pleasing to the Father. When He was abandoned by all His friends and left alone to suffer; when His words were twisted and His intentions mutilated publicly, when the Father allowed Him to be nailed to a cross and the words came to His ear "If you are the Son of God, save yourself, come down from there and then we'll believe you," none of this was able to tempt Christ into sinning, into doubting.

All of this was an attempt to shake His faith in the Father, faith that would carry Him through suffering to the gates of death, faith that would bring salvation to all who hear and believe the message of His Gospel, of His life.

Now you and I, we are ones who have heard this message and trusted; we have heard of His faith and received the salvation it won. Our faith is not so strong as Christ's, but it's present. And this faith is what the world, Satan, and our own sinful flesh want to shake up and tear away.

They try to build up so much sin and temptation in your life that you get frustrated and throw up your hands, saying "I've had enough of this struggle." Certainly it would be much less trying to just give into the sin that our bodies and mind want so badly to participate in; giving into our carnal desires certainly would bring us more of an immediate excitement in our days on earth.

Or they try and build up your sin so much that the lies of the devil saying you've done too much to be forgiven seem to be more and more true. Satan seems to think that if he throws enough sin into the mix we'll eventually believe that our sin is too great—if God really wanted us in His family He would have helped us cease from this sin, but we must be out of the picture, so let's just indulge.

But neither the amount of struggle in life with temptation, nor the amount of your sin, is too much for the Christ with perfect faith and endurance. His faith remains enough, and He is our mighty fortress which we can rest in.

We see that God, in Christ, is able to carry us through our worst trials, keeping us strong through temptations that come at us through our eyes, ears, even our nose, hands, and tongue. When Satan seems to have a rope around our neck and wants to drag us under the waves, we have been taught to pray and promised that our prayers are heard and we are not left alone.

And even when sin has gotten the better of us for the hundredth time, when the blood is on our hands and we didn't even really try to fight the temptation, our mighty fortress comes to

us to remind us—not that we should have done better, but that His blood is here for precisely this moment—He has not forsaken us but yearns to forgive this sin today.

Your sins are forgiven, my brothers and sisters; His body and blood is here to prove that to you, to remind you once again that He died that you may live, He was condemned that you would be forgiven, he endured so that even when your perseverance seemed measly, if existent at all, you would be seen in the Father's eyes as resilient and determined to heed His commandments and love Him and trust Him and seek Him with all your heart.

Satan tried to place doubt in Christ's mind that He truly was the Father's Son, that the Father loved Him at all, given the cruddy situations He found Himself in. You, Christ's brothers and sisters, children of the Father, know that this is precisely what Satan aims to do in your life. He wants you to doubt that you are God's child, that He has forgiven you and He is pleased with you. He places temptation in your life which he hopes will lead to sin in order to lead you from the Father's care.

For this is the worst things that can happen.

It is bad when you speed, steal, and murder. It's a sign of sin in this world when these temptations comes your way. But the worst outcome of any temptation, and their ultimate purpose, is to steal you from the place where Christ has placed you, the place of a child of God, baptized, forgiven, drowned and reborn and looking towards heaven. Satan would love nothing more than to see your life looking at anything but Christ for salvation and satisfaction, yet as much as Satan would love to use some un-assurance of your faith and salvation, Christ reminds us that it is finished.

He endured all temptation so that not a single one of ours needs to tear us from His arms. There is forgiveness for every temptation we dwell upon and wish we could act out. Equally

there is forgiveness for every temptation we are quick to take up. Come to Christ, our mighty fortress who will protect us from what we struggle with and what over takes us—He will hold you forever—do not listen to the devil’s question “if you really are a son of God, a daughter of God...” You are. He has made you so. You are baptized, you are fed. You are held. You are His.

Amen.