

Lent I

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[0 : 00] Forty days and forty nights thou wast fasting in the wild. Forty days and forty nights tempted and yet undefiled. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

! For our faith. That we may go within and keep wet in the joy of the hope of the resurrection of our Lord in forty days.

Today in Anglican circles very often the first Sunday in Lent is called Devil Sunday. Because we have an encounter with Satan as our Lord Jesus Christ is tempted for our salvation.

Perhaps we don't often think about the fact that the Lord Jesus goes into the wilderness for our sake. He submits himself, he subjects himself to this threefold temptation that he may overthrow Satan in the wilderness to save us.

We go with him into the desert and there we are joined with him in his triumph, his conquest, his victory over evil. And ultimately that is what Lent is all about.

[1 : 24] We go through the cross at Lent taking up our cross and following the Lord daily so that we may die. That we may die to ourselves. That we may die to our sins.

And that on Easter Day we may rise in our glorious Savior as he bursts forth from the tomb and conquers the final enemy which is death.

Lent may not be enjoyable but it is a microcosm of the Christian life. It is a pilgrimage that leads us from a world of suffering and pain and turmoil to the glory of Christ's kingdom and his resurrection. So the Lord Jesus goes into the wilderness now to be tempted. And for forty days and forty nights he fasts just like we are invited to do. And after this forty day period he is very hungry.

Now the number forty is extremely significant throughout all of salvation history. God purified the world through the great flood which lasted forty days and forty nights.

[2 : 28] And at the end of that great cataclysm the world was purged and recreated. It was a time of transformation. We think of Moses who went up on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights.

And he was fasted and prayed and received the Ten Commandments. Forty days and forty nights. We think of Elijah who goes on to Mount Korob and prays for forty days and forty nights.

And then he receives God's divine revelation. We think of the Israelites, the chosen people of God. The Hebrew people who were in the desert for forty years because of a generation of disobedient souls.

And after forty years those who had disobeyed God were consumed. And finally the children of Israel were allowed to enter into the promised land. And we come now to our Lord Jesus Christ who is the fulfillment and the perfection of that numerology in Scripture.

For he passed for forty days and forty nights. Let us look at the three temptations. What they are and how we join the Lord Jesus in overcoming these temptations.

[3 : 38] The first temptation is very clear. It is the temptation of our carnal needs and appetites. It is the flesh. Our Lord has fasted forty days and forty nights.

And Satan appears to him as the tempter and says, If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread. And our Lord answers each of these three temptations with the word of God.

Which is exactly what we should do as well. We answer temptation with the authority of God's word. The Holy Scriptures. And Jesus says, Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God.

The first temptation of the flesh for us is overcome by fasting. And that is why we fast for the forty days and forty nights of Lent. But not only do we fast, we also abstain.

Fasting is reducing the amount of food we eat every given day. And abstinence is giving up particular kinds of food, especially the ones we like.

[4 : 42] And we do that as a sign of love for God. We unite ourselves to our crucified Lord by giving up flesh meat. Filet mignon, riba.

We give that up, especially on Wednesdays and Fridays and Lent, as a sign of our love and our obedience to God. Bringing our flesh under the power of the Holy Spirit.

So that it is no longer our flesh that is telling us what to do or how to act. But rather the Holy Ghost. For he is inviting into our lives and into our bodies and souls to guide and direct our path.

That is why we fast. Jesus overthrows Satan the tempter with that first temptation of the flesh. The second temptation is the devil himself. Satan takes our Lord to the top of the temple in Jerusalem. To the pinnacle of the temple. It says, throw yourself off of the temple. Because God has promised the angels will catch you. And you will not hit the ground. And our Lord says, you shall not tempt the Lord your God.

[5 : 47] We overcome the temptation of the devil himself in prayer. When we stay close to Jesus Christ in a life of prayer, of love relationship with God, there is no wiggle room for Satan to get in and to disturb and to distract us and to enter into our imagination or our thought life or our attitudes.

We are called to stay close to Jesus in prayer. And this overcomes Satan himself. For we are to be united to God always in adoration, in confession, in thanksgiving, and in petition and supplication and intercession.

As we pray that way, steadfastly, consistently, Satan has no room in our lives to act. And then finally, our Lord is taken to a great mountain, which you can see this very day.

The Mount of Temptation rests above the Dead Sea. And from it, you can see a great view of the Levant. It is a huge mountain with a large precipice that hangs over into a great valley.

And it is there where our Lord is taken. One interesting note is that monks still live on the Mount of Temptation as hermits. There are caves on the side of it. And if you go out to see it, you might want to do a Greek Orthodox monk.

[7 : 06] You will be very disturbed to see you if you visit. But they do live there. A few of them do anyway. And, of course, it's a great place to be if you want to overcome temptation. But spiritually, we do the same.

We don't have to live as hermits in caves on the side of the great mountain of temptation to overcome the devil. We do that in our own spiritual lives. We do it through this campaign of Christian warfare, this campaign of spiritual warfare.

The final temptation is the world. Satan promises our Lord Jesus Christ the whole world and everything in it, if you will but fall down and worship the evil one.

And our Lord says pointedly, get away from me, Satan. You shall worship the Lord your God, and him alone shall you serve. We overcome the temptation of the world by our almsgiving.

We give till it hurts. That's what almsgiving really means. We are called by God to give of the treasure of our hearts. For where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also.

[8 : 12] And we are called to give financially, sacrificially, prayerfully, for the support of Christ and his kingdom and the advancement of his church. And when we do that, we overcome the temptation of the world and its materialism and its commercialism.

We live, perhaps, in the most debased society in human history, a society obsessed with stuff and an acquisition of stuff, of material things.

And this temptation of the world comes at each of us, but we can overcome it. And during Lent, we are invited to give alms, to give of our substance. And in so doing, we unite our sacrifices, our little, small sacrifices, to the heroic sacrifice of Jesus Christ on Calvary, which saves the whole world and saves you and me.

May God grant you a truly grace-filled, productive, holy, and fruitful Lent, as you persevere in faith, hope, and love, and as you seek to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, by the grace of God.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Amen. Amen.