

The title for today's message is: **Walk through your lives in relationship with God.**

Jesus said: ***You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.***

Grace and peace to you, from God our Father and our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the verses that precede our Gospel lesson for today, Matthew records Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan.

There, Matthew tells us that as Jesus emerged from the water, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended upon Him.

And after that a voice from heaven was heard declaring: ***"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."***

And then something odd happened, the first thing the Spirit of God does, is to lead Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Now, I don't about you, but doesn't this seem a little odd, that the Spirit of God, who was to strengthen Jesus throughout His ministry.

Would, even before Jesus preached His first sermon, before He called His first disciple, and before He performed His first miracle.

Would lead Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted? And yet, this is what all three of the Synoptic Gospels proclaim.

So lets look at our text, and try to discern what this event, that precedes Jesus' ministry actually proclaims.

First, Matthew tells us that Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days. Now, that number is significant.

Not so much because it set a time frame for the season of Lent, but because it is reminiscent of the 40 years Israel wandered in the wilderness during the Exodus.

Following the last of the ten plagues, which God inflicted upon Egypt to free Israel from bondage, they were tested in faith before entering the Promised Land.

Remember, Israel had just entered into a covenantal relationship with God, who not only freed them.

But also gave them the Ten Commandments as the means by which they might live in relationship with God.

Again during those 40 years, Israel's faith was tested, to see if they would trust in God, and become His people by embracing the terms of His covenant.

Therefore, Jesus, following His baptism, in which He was proclaimed the Son of God, and before He began his ministry.

Spent 40 days in the wilderness in which He came to embrace and to trust, in His humanity.

By and through the terms of the new covenant that God would enact, through Him.

And during those 40 days of spiritual retreat, Matthew tells us that Jesus fasted, and at the end of that time of fasting, He was hungry.

Well, according to the commentaries that I read on our text for today, it doesn't mean that "Fasting" was the first of Jesus' miracles.

Not at all, in fact "Fasting" does not mean that Jesus had nothing to eat, or drink for forty days, no human could survive that.

Jesus most likely ate berries, and drank water from streams, that is enough to sustain His life.

However, fasting indicates a period of self-denial, in which Jesus came to reflect upon, it meant to live in a covenantal relationship with God.

In other words, He trusted God to provide for His basic needs, as He contemplated how He might live His life according to His Father's will.

Now, it doesn't sound too odd to me, that God's Spirit would lead Jesus into the wilderness, before He even began His ministry. It makes a lot of sense.

In fact, might each of us be open to God's Spirit leading us to emulate Jesus during these 40 days of Lent.

To spend this time contemplating how we might better live our lives in accordance to the will of God.

For we, too, have been baptized into the redeeming grace of God, in which God has claimed us as His own, adopted children.

Now, let's look at the temptations that Jesus faced, which are temptations that also confront us all today. As well as how crafty the tempter is!

Now, notice how the tempter confronts Jesus, he said: ***"If you are the Son of God..."***

“If”. That’s right, from the very beginning the tempter strikes at the very heart of Jesus’ faith.

God had just proclaimed Jesus to be His Beloved Son. So should He now doubt it? Should He have to prove it? And what about us?

Do we believe, and trust in the fact, that as a result of our baptism, God has proclaimed us to be His son’s and daughters.

Who are grafted into the death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and heirs of His Holy kingdom? Should we doubt it? Should we have to prove it?

Inherent in this approach to Jesus is the idea that our relationship with God should grant us special favors.

Even though Jesus was hungry, and only had enough to eat, and drink to sustain His life for the past 40 days.

The tempter says to Jesus: ***If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.***

Now, I have no doubt that Jesus could have done that. After all, He was able to multiply a few loaves of bread to feed over five thousand people.

But He didn’t! Rather, He quoted a passage from the 8th chapter of Deuteronomy: ***Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.***

Now, Jesus didn’t use His relationship with God to meet His own personal needs, before He even began His ministry.

We were given a glimpse of Jesus’ willingness to sacrifice His own human needs in submission to the will of His heavenly Father.

You see He wouldn't use His power for personal gain. And perhaps God's Spirit might lead us to ponder this thought, as we now walk through 40 days of Lent.

Perhaps we might contemplate the fact that being God's children through baptism, is not intended to satisfy our human hunger.

Nor for the many things we feel that we need in this life. But rather, by focusing on the Word of God, we satisfy our deepest hunger.

Not for food, or worldly things, but that of walking in relationship with God, trusting that He will provide for all our needs.

There were other temptations which Jesus handled in the same way, never using His Divine nature but for our sake, using His human nature.

Look, the temptations that Jesus faced were real. The temptations that we face are real too.

But we have been given the Spirit of God, and His Word for us in the Scriptures.

So, may we use this time to truly come to grasp what it means to walk through our lives in relationship with God.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.