

Invocabit

Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

When you are tempted by the devil, it should come as no surprise.

Both God and the devil use temptation for their own purposes.

The Devil tempts in order to destroy you and bring you back under his power.

From the moment of your baptism until the moment of your death, you are presented with a whole series of such stumbling blocks.

But, as we learn in the Small Catechism, "God tempts no one."

Nevertheless, it is God the Holy Ghost who led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil — immediately after His baptism.

In the same way, God leads all the baptized out into the wilderness/world to be strengthened and tempered through trials and temptation.

From the perspective of God, these are tests for strengthening.

From the perspective of the devil, these are stumbling blocks and snares.

The Lord seeks your good while the devil seeks your destruction.

And the one thing that makes a difference between these two opposing goals are God's Word and Holy Sacraments.

That's why, *Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*

When you have your existence in, with and under God's Word, you live.

None of the devil's wiles can harm you and every temptation which Christ overcomes in you will only serve to strengthen faith and life.

But when you exist apart from God's Word—without obeying His Commands or believing His promises, you are dead even while you live.

The devil's temptations have accomplished their goal of destroying you.

Therefore, it is the very nature of temptation for the devil to be about convincing you that you can and should deal with life according to your own bright ideas instead of by strictly following God's Word.

As can be easily seen, he will do this in any variety of ways:

Sometimes he will use your own natural desires for worldly goods.

...food, water, clothing, pleasure, approval of your peers, love and power...

He says, take what you need, don't wait until God gives it to you.

God is very busy and He has probably forgotten you.

After all, if God really cared about you, he surely would have supplied this need by now—look, 40 days and He's given you no food!

But in this temptation we already see the devil for the liar that he is.

He wants you to see only with the eyes of sight and not with the eyes of faith which see that God HAS sustained you all this time.

Hunger or no hunger, Jesus did not die. God miraculously preserved Him!

So, Jesus replies, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word..."*

"I will live by faith and not by sight! I will give heed only to the word of God and leave it to His care how He will supply Me in this desert."

Standing in Christ's shoes and speaking these words, you also prevail!

But now, when the eyes of faith have been opened, the devil wants you to fake the faith and to believe things that God has never promised.

He says, "Go ahead, do whatever you want and God will protect you! Forget the ordinary means of life and sustenance, God doesn't need to use them.

"If He can keep you alive without food for 40 days, surely also He can preserve you from death if You throw yourself down from here."

In the same way, Satan says to you, "God is all-powerful. He can save you with or without the means of grace.

"Look at the miraculous way that He has brought you to believe to this point.

"Why worry, then, about being Baptized or about returning to your baptism by daily contrition and repentance?!

"Why bother with Church and with sermons? Why come to the Lord's Supper?

"Nevermind God's command to use His means and to trust only in His promises.

"Believe, instead, those ideas that you spin out of your own mind."

But Jesus replies, *"You shall not tempt the Lord, your God."*

So also, you who are Baptized into Christ reply with the same words and so participate in Christ's victory.

Finally, the devil seeks to place before you a high and lofty goal, to save the entire world.

All you have to do is break one little commandment!

In this temptation he seeks to set you up as a god unto yourself

—one who decides on his own what is best and acts on this.

Who needs to follow God's commands or His counsel?!?

If the goal is lofty enough—any means of obtaining it will be just fine.

It is as if Satan has called you, up on Medicine Butte/Oyster Ridge.

From there you can see the entire town and for many miles around.

Then he says: "I will give you all these souls and will grow your church—all you have to do is worship me.

"Just a little false worship—maybe an unchristian song or an unfaithful practice—just think of all the souls you'll save.

"Who'll notice anyway? It'll probably slip right by everyone. No harm done."

What frightening temptations indeed! Had Jesus succumbed to any of these we would have no hope, no life, no salvation.

But Jesus did not succumb—and still to this day, Jesus Himself resists these temptations in you.

By the power of your own Baptism, Christ dwells in you by faith so that His Words against the devil still ring out with strength today: *"Away with you Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"*

When Christ works repentance in you, it is He Himself who shouts these Words at the devil from your own heart and mouth.

You are not left on your own to battle Satan—as though copying Christ.

If this were so, you could only lose. Instead, you need Christ to do it for you.

And so Christ does. He Himself enters you today in Sermon and Supper.

Thus, He defeats the devil for you so that: *The devil leaves you and behold angels come and minister to you.*

For the devil with His temptations cannot abide where Christ is dwelling with His Word.

By God's grace today, you are in the presence of the ministering angels and all the company of heaven.

Here your true needs are all fulfilled and the Devil must leave you.

Here your bond of faith with Christ is strengthened and His Word becomes your own word.

Here, the terrible temptations of the Devil are turned into the wonderful instruments of God for the exercise and strengthening of faith.

Here all the kingdoms of the world, and everything in them is placed into your hands and under your feet.

Here the Lord has mercifully heard your prayer and defended you from the enemy of your life and faith. Amen.