

02/18/2024 Mark 1:9-15 "Into the Wilderness"

ENTRANCE – Baptism, Temptation, Initiation of ministry

Today's text of Mark 1:9-15 consists of three parts: 1) The Baptism of Jesus, 2) His Temptation, and 3) the initiation of His Galilee ministry. I will focus mainly on the second part, the temptation of Jesus, because I already shared the first and third parts, but the more we are in Lent season.

It begins on Ash Wednesday, last week, and ends on the day before Easter Saturday, commemorating the 40 days that Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness, during which He was tempted by Satan, preparing to begin His ministry.

Notice, the sequence that there is a Temptation between the Baptism and His Public Ministry, which is significant for Jesus and its application to us as well.

CONTENTS

1. The meaning of the Baptism of Jesus

Then, let me review about the baptism of Jesus and what it meant to Him and us, in the relevance of the sequence. Having waited for thirty years of obscurity, Jesus was finally revealing Himself to the public for the first time. We call Epiphany, the "manifestation of Jesus."

Four things share

We saw four crucial points that characterize His life and ministry: 1) Having received the sinner's baptism, Jesus identified Himself with sinners, to embrace and empathize with us to save. God who is holy, righteous, and eternal Judge, could not forgive the sin and evil of humankind without punishing it justly.

So, He has made His Son to be sin for us, and be responsible for our sins, which God has punished through Christ's body upon the cross, so that He can justly forgive us. That's why Jesus was in the midst of the sinners, waiting for the sinner's baptism. Being lowered into the water and then rising again pictured His death and resurrection, which was the climax of Jesus' life and ministry. And we can lean on Him in all matters because He knows and understands us.

2) When Jesus was coming out of the water, He saw heaven being torn open. It means Jesus has been the decisive, final connection between God and the sinners. Throughout His ministry, Jesus continues to link heaven and earth, the realms above and below, and God and humanity.

And that heaven is still open to us. In Christ, we have the boldness and confidence to enter into the presence of God.

3) Through that opened heaven, the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove visibly. This was a special anointing or outpouring that would rest on Jesus for His three-year public ministry.

After that, the same Spirit, “Another the same kind of the Original Advocate, Jesus Himself, is with the believers to the end to witness, teach, help, guide, rebuke, comfort, encourage, remind, empower, and pray for us.

4) Fourth, the Father’s audible appearance: “A voice came from heaven: “You are My Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” The Father expressed His deep affection for His Son and affirmed Him. And this is the new possibility and new life, where God has extended and lavished His same love for His begotten Son on those who believe.

All ministries are ready

This is a marvelous scene of the Trinity. When the Messiah the King was about to launch His mission to save humankind the Father in heaven affirmed audibly, accompanied by the visible manifestation of the Spirit! It’s a decisive moment that all things are ready for His public ministry. It was like His divine coronation ceremony and the inauguration of His ministry.

Into the wilderness, not the festival

Q. Then, what can we expect from now? You gotta celebrate and enjoy His launching ministry? However, what followed straightaway is His confrontation with Satan.

2. The Temptation in the Wilderness

v12 “At once the Spirit sent Him out into the wilderness,” v13 “and He was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan.

We see a great contrast before Jesus begins His ministry. From the Jordan River to the Judean Wilderness of wild beasts: from the opening of the heavens, the descent of the Holy Spirit that followed the voice of God, and the utter abandonment Jesus' desperate sense of inadequacy and weakness, and the attacks of the devil.

A. The Temptation by the Will of the Father

The contrast could not have been more shocking, but it was necessary. Jesus deliberately went into the wilderness with His own will and a firm purpose, because it was God’s will. “The Spirit compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness.”

Jesus’ temptation was no accidental encounter, nor happen by the will of Satan, but it was a divine appointment scheduled by the will of God the Father, implemented by His Spirit. **The same Spirit**

that descended is now pushing Him out into the wild. Luke says, (4:1) Jesus was led being filled with the Spirit.

Remember that neither God nor the Holy Spirit ever tempts anyone (James 1:13). Yet, the Spirit's first act in Jesus' ministry is to lead Him into the desert to expose Him to Satan's testing.

If you feel like your life is in the wilderness, know that there is a clear will of God, and it is not because He hates you or is indifferent to you, but because He loves you.

Q. Why is the wilderness test necessary? It is found in the Old Testament.

Then, why this Confronting Combat is necessary and so important?

a. The first Adam who failed the test

First, we find the reason in the first Adam, the representative of all humanity, who succumbed to temptation and brought death. Romans 5:17 says, "For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many." v18 "Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, ..."

All humankind is under the control of Satan

Because of one person, all humankind is under the control of Satan in spiritual dead. Paul says, "You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil (Satan) -the commander of the powers in the unseen world. ..." (Eph 2:2)

John says, how the people without God or love toward Him live in this world, with three categories they love. "For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions." (1 John 2:16) To the general people, this is a very attractive life. However, it says, "These are not from the Father, but are from this world."

And we are commanded, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (v15). Paul says, "All of us also lived that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our nature, we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else." (Eph 2:3)

People want to be happy by pursuing these things, by having more stuff, by experiencing more physical and stimulating pleasure, and by pursuing praise from others. We believers too still have that desire, as our sinful nature.

But in fact, those who are captured by that lose the true freedom of their souls, similar to how drugs affect people. Finally, they destroy them. But more basically, they are blinded by false and distorted self-love, the sinful life of living without God.

On the contrary, “For the kingdom of God is not eating, and drinking, but righteousness (before God) and peace (heavenly peace, the peace with God and others, and with oneself), and joy (the greater joy than all the pleasures of this world) in the Holy Spirit.” (Rom 14:17)

True love Only Comes from God Who is the Love itself. We are most happy when we know that we are loved by God and love Him.

The Bible declares that all the problems of humankind are caused by sin, and sin is caused by Satan. Satan's power in the world is referred to as a nation in opposition to the Kingdom of God, and the king of that nation is the devil. Because Satan is now the prince of this world, a battle with him is inevitable.

Now, from the time Satan's kingdom first stood until now, human history has entered **a new phase**.

The Second Adam must demonstrate His victory over Satan.

In contrast to the first Adam, Jesus, “the last Adam, a life-giving-Spirit”, the Savior of the sinners from all bondage of sin and temptation that comes from Satan must be able to show that He is the One who Conquers the devil and his work. He said that truth exactly later in Mark 3:27 “In fact, no one can enter the strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house.”

Jesus has to demonstrate His power and authority over Satan. If He is going to conquer the kingdom of sin and free its captives, He must practice complete power over evil. So, it is the “war in the wilderness.” Here is Christ in deadly combat for the eternal souls of men.

If He loses, we are lost!

b. Representing the Israelites in the wilderness

The second reason for the necessity of the wilderness is because Jesus represents the Israelites wandering in the wilderness for forty years, where they grumbled, complained, and failed to trust their God.

Just as Israel passed through the sea, was sent the Spirit (Isa 63:11 says, “God sent His Spirit among them from the Exodus...”), was called God’s “son” (Exod 4: 22 God called them as His firstborn son”), and was led into the wilderness for 40 years, **so too** Jesus went through the waters, received the Spirit, was declared God’s son, and was taken into the wilderness, but for 40 days.

He represents our Church in the wilderness

It also shows us the journey of Christian life. The NT interprets the journey from Exodus to Canaan Land as the life of a Christian. Paul says, the passing through the Red Sea of their forefathers as "They were all baptized ... in the sea." (1Co 10:2)

Acts 7:38 says, "The Church (ekklesia) in the wilderness." So, the Bible teaches us that our life on earth is in the wilderness, heading to Promised Land. Moses says, "You will cross the Jordan (the transition from life on earth to eternal life) and live in the land your God is giving you," (Deut 12:10) that is the eternal heaven.

So, it was the Lord's voluntary act of identification with the people of God in their wilderness.

As Jesus took on humanity for Himself, he took on all the flaws and weaknesses that come with it. "This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for He faced all of the same testings we do, yet He did not sin." (Heb 4:15) Christ, who took on our nature and our temptations, went with us to the desert of temptation, the place of our life, being pressed down by our need, sinned against, and tempted as we are.

And with the Spirit's help, He must triumph and overcome the devil, and lead all who trust in Him into the promised land of eternal glory.

Therefore, rather than shrinking back, as Israel and us sometimes, were so prone to do, our King, our Commander in Chief, the true Israel goes out to fight in the trenches with us and for us. In so doing He turns back the enemy and provides hope and a pattern for us to do the same.

Yet, in very poor conditions to fight

Now let's take a look at more details of His testing in the wilderness. The setting for Jesus' temptation was very difficult.

First, Satan meets Jesus in the wilderness, a deserted land, not a garden. It was a place of desolation where He was removed from people and provision. The Judean wilderness, is a dry and dusty, inhospitable, and dangerous desert, broken up by rocky peaks, craggy cliffs, and plunging ravines.

Second, Jesus has been fasting for 40 days in a situation where He is desperately lacking everything He needs to sustain life, and in the vulnerability that comes with that.

Third, Jesus is alone, completely isolated.

Fourth, the wilderness is filled with wild beasts. Lions and bears were in there. They are mentioned immediately following the mention of Satan, suggesting they are in partnership with the devil.

It was a very tough setting barely stand it without the help of the angels. The most exalted One at His baptism was also the most humiliated One. Just like He identified Himself as a sinner through His baptism, He made Himself in the same situation of us being exposed by Satan's temptation at His weakest time in the wilderness.

The content of the three tests

Q. How Satan Tempted Jesus? First, He asked Jesus to create bread when He was hungry, physically weak, but also emotionally drained. Since Jesus became just like us He should have felt, self-pity, loneliness, and fear, and the pain of his fasting and the awful temptation of murmur against God like Israel did in the wilderness.

Satan tempted Jesus to use His divine power to turn stones into bread to satisfy His hunger after fasting for 40 days. This is not a questioning of His sonship, but rather a proposal based on an acknowledgment of the fact that He is the Son. He can put an end to current deficiencies and questions by performing miracles.

Second, Satan brought Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem, challenging Him to prove His divinity by throwing Himself down, suggesting that angels would save him from harm.

The point at the top of the temple procession, known as the "Place of blowing of the trumpets" was used to proclaim the Jewish holy days.

The Lord is standing atop the observation platform where the white-robed priest has just left. The time is dawn, signaling that the priest has completed his duties and it is time for the morning sacrifice. Down below, in the priest's courtyard, the morning sacrifice was being performed. The heavy temple doors slowly opened, and the priest's silver trumpets called Israel to begin a new day by coming before the Lord.

So, how the people would greet Him with cheers, and how great worship would be returned to Him, as He leaped down into the midst of the priests and people, supported by angels! The goal would be accomplished at once.

Now, the scene changes again, moving to God's wide world, where Jesus is standing atop a high mountain. Satan showed Him all the kingdoms of the world. The beauty, strength, and majesty of the world in all its glory, its affairs, its power, its greatness, its communion, and its ideas, are clearly seen.

It was a world that the Son of God, secluded in his Nazareth home, had never seen before and could not have imagined, a world that grew in wonder as it went on.

Satan will offer Him dominion over all the nations of the world if Jesus would worship him.

It seems to provide a total of the craving for physical pleasure, everything we see, and the boasting of this life.

The claim was justified and had a reasonable basis, for the current situation was that everything in the world had been "handed over" to Satan and he was exercising his power to give it to whomever he pleased. Satan's quest was "*Your kingdom, not the Father's, come.*"

Key implications of the exam

The three episodes of Satan's temptations indicate that Satan primarily attacked Jesus in His role as the Suffering Servant. His goal was to get Jesus *not to suffer!* Because the success of Jesus' earthly mission depended upon His humiliation, ultimately leading to the cross. Paul said, "He humbled Himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross." (Phil 2:8)

It meant Satan's doom and destruction, and it meant salvation for you and me. This is what was at stake in the war in the wilderness!

Could He do it? Win? The matter of obedience

The question arises. Would He be able to meet and conquer His and our enemy? Could He endure the most alluring assaults the devil could devise? The three tests dissolve into a single matter of essence: absolute submission to the will of God.

If He obeys the Father's will, it can only be suffering. It is a miserable end, a helpless and hopeless suffering that ends in the agony of the cross as an evildoer, a suffering that is ignored, betrayed, and abandoned by His own people and not cared for by God.

The Lord's Obedience and Victory

However, the Lord was convinced that perfect obedience to His Father's will, above all else for the sake of the kingdom of God, was the way to achieve that kingdom. It was His royal duty "to crush the serpent's head" (Gen.3:15), "to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8), and to unseat the illegitimate "god of this world" (2Cor. 4:4).

The liberation of people, by doing that, from the devil's dominion, was the goal of Christ's mission: a world restored and consecrated to God, where the peace of God dwells and the glory of God abides.

While the first Adam failed under the best circumstances, Christ, the last Adam, endures temptation by obedience, prevails over Satan's temptations relying on the word of God and resisting the devil's lies, and brings life to those all who trust in Him.

In its highest fulfillment, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve," (Matt 4:10) expressed not only the defeat of Satan and the triumph of Christ but the very principle of His kingdom, the Kingdom of all victories.

Victory over all the failures of the OT (Moses and Elijah associated with the 40 days)

The forty days of Jesus in the wilderness also reminds us of Moses' 40 days on Mount Sinai (Exod 34:28) and Elijah's 40 days at Mount Horeb (1 Kgs 19:8), the same mountain of Sinai.

These three figures, Moses, Elijah, and the Messiah constitute three phases of covenant history. Moses was the bestower of the covenant, Elijah was the restorer, and the Messiah was the renewer and fulfillment, and they all went through a similar outward process of consecrating themselves to their work in a sense.

But, Moses failed after 40 days of fasting when he threw the stone tablets of the law in anger at Israel, Elijah failed before the 40 days were up in despair of Israel. It was not just a personal failure, but a failure of covenant giving and restoration.

But Jesus passed the test despite being attacked for 40 days. He overcame as a fully human being and as the Messiah for Israel and us.

3. Initiating the ministry

Passing through the wilderness, being filled with the Holy Spirit, and surely being filled with the intimate fellowship with the Father we see the sequence moving to His ministry.

V14 "Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," He said, "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

CONCLUSION

Now, I want to wrap up my sermon. Just as the sequence was important to the Lord, so it is to us.

1. For us who are united with Jesus Christ, baptized into His death and resurrection, He knows us, understands us, empathizes with us, and loves us, and through the indwelling Holy Spirit, He ministers us to the end of the world. Through Him, the connection between God and us, we have the freedom and boldness to approach the Father's presence at any time.

Most of all, we experience how much God loves us, pouring out the same love He loves His Son, only because we are in Christ.

2. But let us remember that the place in life to which this grace leads us is a barren wilderness, which is the very characteristic of our life journey, the life of the Church.

Has your life been peaceful and unharmed? Rejoice and be thankful, but remember that you are still in the wilderness.

When trials, troubles, and temptations come upon you, do not imagine that some strange thing has happened to you. In any form, it is by the will of God as it is written, "All things are of God." (Rom 11:36)

The Lord's temptation did not end with the forty days but continued all the time. There was the proposal of His brothers to show himself to the world, the attempt of the crowd to make Him king, and the question of Pilate, "Are you the king?"

Likewise, in this wilderness, Satan's temptations are always lurking around us, by "masquerading himself as an angel of light" (2Co.11:14) alluring us that he can give us happiness and satisfaction with the things of this world. But it's not a real one, nor will last long but temporal.

Never forget the Lord in the wilderness. The Lord, the Head of the Church, can never be separated from you and me, and He is still present in our wilderness place, as He is among the seven churches, by His Holy Spirit.

Christian, be encouraged. Christ knows what you are going through. He may say, "*Have I not overcome them all? Abide in me, that you also may be overcomers, even as I am.*"

Above all, the Lord wants us to deepen our relationship with Him and grow spiritually. Then, "we are more than conquerors through Christ our Lord Who loved us." (Rom.8:37).

The one thing the Lord teaches that overcomes the wilderness test is the **sword of the Spirit**, the Word of God. When Paul tells in Ephesians to put on the full armor of God, it is the only offensive weapon. Abide in the Word of the Lord. Love the Word, and fill your heart and mind with it.

Ex) One day last week I was troubled and stressed, and it was hard to sleep. But the next morning, when I obeyed the words, "Return to Me with all your heart, render your heart," in the book of Joel, I gave my heart.

Then, I could be sure that "my God is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love," and that's all I need. With that, I know that I have nothing to worry about or fear, no matter what happens.

I want to introduce the words I turn to when I'm really struggling. 2 Timothy 1:7 "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." We already received God's power, motivating love, and self-control. Remember, when the Word is in you, you can overcome Satan.

Also, like the Lord, God is the one who sends angels to us. Hebrews says, "Angels are only servants - sent to care for people who will inherit salvation." (1:14)

Like the Lord, one thing we learn in the wilderness is total obedience to the Lord. God made the Israelites go through the wilderness to enter the promised land, not the easy and quick way, because Deuteronomy 8:2 says "Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands." We know we are not easily becoming humble and obedient people.

It means that we too take up our cross, deny our old nature and self, and follow Him. The Lord also promised that whoever loves and obeys Him, the Father and himself will enter into them and live in them.

3. God doesn't want us to stay in the wilderness, however.

God wants to establish His kingdom through His people. That's why He led Israelites to the Promised Land that "all people on earth will be blessed through them." (Gen 12:2)

In other words, God has called us to the work of building His kingdom and wants our lives to reveal the gospel of Jesus Christ through the trial in the wilderness, the gospel of the Lord who has overcome all sin and the tempter Satan so that in Him all the oppressed, the imprisoned, and the oppressed may be set free. We are the fragrance and the letter of Christ.

Finally, never forget one thing: Jesus was in the wilderness, in Him, we are more than conquerors.