

Luke 4:1-13 (First Sunday in Lent—Series C)

“Beneficiaries”

Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT

March 6, 2022

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our text is Gospel lesson appointed for the First Sunday in Lent recorded in Luke 4.

¹Now Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ²forty days being tempted by the devil. And He did not eat anything during those days and when they were ended, He was hungry. ³And the devil said to Him, “If you are the Son of God, speak to these stones in order that they might become bread.” ⁴And Jesus answered him, “It stands written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’” ⁵And taking Him up he showed Him all the kingdoms of the inhabited world in a moment of time ⁶and the devil said to Him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for they have been handed over to me and I give it to whomever I want. ⁷Therefore, if you fall down and worship before me, all will be yours.” ⁸And Jesus answered and said to him, “It stand written, ‘The Lord your God you shall worship and you shall serve [perform religious rights to] only Him.’” ⁹And he led Him to Jerusalem and stood Him on the highest point of the temple and said to Him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰for it stands written, ‘To His angels He will command concerning you to guard you’ ¹¹and ‘on their hands they will life you up, lest you should strike your foot against a stone.’” ¹²And Jesus answered and said to him, “It says ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’” ¹³And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

A beneficiary is a person or thing that receives help or advantage from something.

Beneficiary is often used in connection with life insurance. The named beneficiary receives the proceeds and benefits of the policy. But the word also shows up in many other contexts as well. A college may be the beneficiary of a private donation. Your uncle’s will may make the church his sole beneficiary, in which case all his money and property will go to it when he dies. In a more general way, a restaurant may be the beneficiary when the one across the street closes down and its whole lunch crowd starts coming in. As we begin to engage the text of God’s Word before us today in Luke 4, consider that you and I have been the beneficiary of both Adam and Jesus Christ.

Now please do not get excited about being the beneficiary of Adam. What he has given his earthly descendants is nothing to celebrate. It would have been best had none of us been the recipient of what Adam gave us. Within the world so newly made, the devil, that ancient serpent, enticed Adam and Eve with temptation to eat the fruit of the tree of which God had explicitly commanded them **not** to eat. They could eat the fruit of all the trees in the Garden of Eden with the exception of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Everything else in Paradise was open to them. But the devil tested and tempted the man and the woman, deceiving them. "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate" (Gen. 3:6 ESV).

Adam should have put an end to the whole thing. Adam should have spoken God's Word to Eve, "Thus says the Lord, you may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:16–17 ESV). But no! Tempted by the devil, Adam failed. He was tempted and he ate of the fruit. He disobeyed God's Word. Adam sinned. He was now guilty of breaking God's command.

But this wasn't just Adam's failure. It had collective and universal results. All of Adam's descendants—including you and me—are the beneficiaries of this sinful action. The apostle Paul explains it for us in Romans 5. "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned. . . . One

trespass led to condemnation for all men. . . . By the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Rom. 5:12, 18a, 19a ESV).

Let's say it another way. In, with, and under Adam's sin, we sinned. In, with, and under Adam's guilt, we are guilty. In, with, and under Adam's death, we die.¹ Being beneficiaries of Adam means that we literally receive NO benefits, only the curse of sin which is death. We are conceived and born without the ability to fear and love God. That means we are spiritually blind and dead. We are born with an endless desire to sin because we are enemies of God according to the nature we inherited from Adam. What's more, you and I deserve only God's temporal and eternal death sentence. Benefits from Adam? None. We and all God's human creatures are rather enslaved in a lifelong sinful condition from which we cannot free ourselves.

But even as we are the beneficiaries of the first Adam, we miraculously find ourselves also the beneficiaries of the Second Adam. Maybe this is a new term for you. The Second Adam is our Lord, Jesus Christ. Whereas the first Adam was tempted and failed, Jesus Christ the Second Adam was tempted and triumphed! Adam was tempted in the Garden and he ate. Jesus was tempted in the wilderness when He was hungry, and He did not eat! He did not command those stones to become bread. He did not yield to the tempter's lures to be a bread king and satisfy the world's material needs. Jesus would not give in to become some kind of magician and impress people with His razzle-dazzle. Nor would Jesus become an earthly ruler and exert power. No, Jesus would not succumb to the temptation of the devil.

¹ Francis C. Rossow, *Gospel Handles* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2001), 27.

He would do none of these things with which the devil tested Him. Jesus would live a perfect life in humanity's place and go to Jerusalem to the cross so that all the descendants of Adam would be saved from their sins.

But before the cross came the temptation. In the wilderness, Christ the Second Adam was truly tempted. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us that throughout His earthly life, Jesus was tempted in every respect as we are, yet He did not sin (Heb. 4:15). Jesus did not fail. Adam became guilty of sin. Jesus Christ, the Second Adam, was not guilty. Jesus triumphed over temptation. But Jesus' triumph wasn't just His triumph. Like Adam's sin, Jesus' victory over temptation also has collective and universal results. We return to Romans 5. "Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:18–19 ESV).

Let's say it another way. In, with, and under Jesus' victory, we are victorious. In, with, and under His keeping of the Ten Commandments, we keep the Ten Commandments. The Second Adam succeeded precisely where the first Adam failed—and we are the beneficiaries! We are the one's who receive REAL benefits from Jesus' perfect life lived for us as our substitute. During His earthly life, Jesus was actively obedient to the Word and Commandments of God the Father. He kept every Law and Commandment of God perfectly, but not for Himself, rather, for you who were born under the Law and could not keep it. Galatians 4:4-5, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law."

Jesus lived a perfect life for you according to God's holy Word. He was sinless in your place. As a result, Christ's sinlessness, His righteousness, becomes yours. Because of Jesus, you are counted righteous before God. And what of your sins, all those times you have and will break God's commandments? What of your failures to always fear, love, and trust in God? What about all those times you did not show love and mercy to your neighbor? Jesus took your sins and failures to obey God upon Himself as if they were His.

You see, Jesus' didn't simply live a perfect life for you. He went all the way to the death of the cross for you. He gave you His perfect rightness in exchange for your sins and sinfulness. 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For our sake [God] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in [Jesus] we might become the righteousness of God." And 1 Peter 2:24, "[Jesus] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Pet. 2:24 ESV). Those wounds were the nails piercing His hands and feet. It was the spear that pierced His side. On the cross, Jesus the Sinless Son of God became covered in the sins of God's human creatures beginning with the sin of Adam. Jesus' shed His most holy blood to make atonement for those sins, to win your forgiveness, and to give to you the blessed assurance that "It is finished." Salvation from sin, death, and the power of the devil is won. And to confirm it, He rose again on the third day. It is Christ's life **and** death **and** resurrection that won your forgiveness of sins, rescue from death and the devil, and eternal salvation.

The victory of Christ over the temptations of the devil, the triumph of Jesus over sin and death by His cross and resurrection, is also your victory and triumph. You are the beneficiaries of the gifts of Jesus Christ! You are clothed in His righteousness. Your sins are

forgiven through the Jesus' blood. You have been washed in the waters of Baptism and have the new life of faith and love granted to you by the Holy Spirit. And in this new life of faith, you will live eternally as children of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.