

**Matthew 4:1-11 (First Sunday in Lent—Series A)**  
**“His Victory Is Our Victory”**  
**Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield, CT**  
**February 26, 2023**

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

Our text is the Gospel lesson for this First Sunday in Lent, the temptation of Jesus, recorded in Matthew, chapter 4.

<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus was led up into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup>And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, at the end He was hungry. <sup>3</sup>And the tempter approached and said to Him, “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” <sup>4</sup>But He answered and said, “It stands written: *A person will not live by bread alone; rather, by every word that comes out through the mouth of God.*” <sup>5</sup>Then the devil took Him into the holy city and stood Him on the pinnacle of the temple <sup>6</sup>and said to Him, “If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down, for it stands written *that to His angels He will give orders concerning You and upon their hands they will carry you, lest you strike Your foot against a stone.*” <sup>7</sup>Jesus said to him, “Again it stands written: *You shall not test the Lord your God.*” <sup>8</sup>Again the devil took Him onto a very high mountain and he showed to Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup>And he said to Him, “All these things I will give to you, if you fall down and worship me.” <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to him, “Leave, Satan! For it stands written: *You shall worship the Lord your God and you shall serve Him alone.*” <sup>11</sup>Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and began to serve Him.

How many of you wear Nike sneakers or athletic wear? You can pay over \$100 for a pair of Nike Air Jordans, the shoes that were all the rage when I was in high school. *Nike* is the English spelling of the Greek word for “victory.” The branding is meant to give one the idea that if you wear Nike products, you are set up for victory on the court, field, or track. The Nike Swoosh logo is one of the world’s most well-known icons. But let me show you a lesser-known symbol that assures you of a victory that Nike can’t possibly deliver.



This Christian symbol uses the same word, Nike, *Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς Νικᾷ!* and means “Jesus Christ Conquers” or “Jesus Christ is the Victor.” Jesus is the Victor over Satan, sin,

and death and that means that you who are in Christ Jesus are also victorious. His victory is your victory.

There is another "V" word to consider this morning. It is quite the opposite of "victor." The word is *victim*. What is a victim? Merriam-Webster defines the word this way. "One that is acted on and usually adversely affected by a force or agent, such as one that is injured, destroyed, or sacrificed under any of various conditions; one that is subjected to oppression, hardship, or mistreatment; one that is tricked or duped." That's humanity! That's us! We're victims of the devil's temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden! Adam and Eve were the first victims, and so all their descendants followed in their legacy of sin. As we heard God's Word in the Epistle lesson from 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" (Rom. 5:12 ESV).

Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan, the Adversary, who is the devil, the Slanderer. They willingly disobeyed God's command not to eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They chose to not fear, love, and trust in their Creator above all things and sought to "be like God, knowing good and evil." That sin-disease spread to all of their descendants down to this very day. Along with David in Psalm 51, you and I confess, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:3–5 ESV).

What's more, you and I continue to be victims of the temptations not only of the devil, but also of this world and our own sinful flesh. We read in the *Large Catechism* of Martin Luther, "Temptation . . . is of three kinds: of the flesh, of the world, and of the devil. For we dwell in the flesh and carry the old Adam about our neck. He exerts himself and encourages us daily to unchastity, laziness, gluttony and drunkenness, greed and deception, to defraud our neighbor and to overcharge him. In short, the old Adam encourages us to have all kinds of evil lusts, which cling to us by nature and to which we are moved by the society, the example, and what we hear and see of other people. They often wound and inflame even an innocent heart. Next comes the world, which offends us in word and deed. It drives us to anger and impatience. In short, there is nothing but hatred and envy, hostility, violence and wrong, unfaithfulness, vengeance, cursing, railing, slander, pride and haughtiness, with useless finery, honor, fame, and power. No one is willing to be the least. Everyone desires to sit at the head of the group and to be seen before all. Then comes the devil, pushing and provoking in all directions. But he especially agitates matters that concern the conscience and spiritual affairs. He leads us to despise and disregard both God's Word and works. He tears us away from faith, hope, and he brings us into misbelief, false security, and stubbornness. Or, on the other hand, he leads us to despair, denial of God, blasphemy, and innumerable other shocking things. These are snares and nets, indeed, real fiery darts that are shot like poison into the heart, not by flesh and blood, but by the devil."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Timothy McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2005), 420–421.

You and I are victims of the temptation of the devil, the world, and our flesh. And like the first Adam, we often fall into sin. We fall short of the glory of God. We fail to be the people He has called us to be as Christians as we fail not only to love God, but we also do not always show love to our neighbor, that is, anyone to whom we can show mercy.

But there stands Jesus, the Son of God in human flesh. His was a divinely arranged temptation! He was led into the wilderness following His baptism in the Jordan River precisely to be "tempted by the devil." Jesus entered the wilderness to be the champion for the people of Israel and for all of God's people. Israel, during the wilderness wanderings at the time of the Exodus, was tested by God for faith and righteousness. But the sin of the people led them astray. Remember the golden calf that they worshipped? Time and again, Israel failed, falling into sin and gross idolatry. Is that not also true for us who daily fight against the same temptations of the devil, world, and flesh?

But it was God's will that His One-of-a-Kind Son, Jesus, not simply be tested, but tempted, and so prove Himself to be the One who overcomes Satan in place of, and for the sake of, all of God's people. So in our place, Jesus was tempted to use His own power to serve Himself in time of need. He was tempted to consider that, as God's Son, God's power is available to protect and sustain Jesus. Would He trust that promise or put the Lord God to the test in doubt? Satan presumed that the Son of God will worship and serve someone. He sought to turn Jesus aside from wholehearted worship and service of God His Father.

It was an epic failure! Jesus, tempted in the wilderness, was victorious. Where Adam and Eve failed, where the people of Israel failed, where you and I have failed and will continue to fall into sin following temptation, Jesus Christ has conquered! He kept all of

God's commandments in our place. He perfectly did the will of the heavenly Father. Jesus Christ is the Victor! And joy of all joys, so are we!

Jesus is the Victor over Satan in the wilderness on behalf of all people. Jesus' triumph has collective and universal results. "In, with, and under His victory, we are victorious. In, with, and under His keeping of the Ten Commandments, we keep the Ten Commandments."<sup>2</sup> Jesus, the Second Adam, succeeded where the first Adam failed—and you and I are the beneficiaries. Again, from Romans 5 we read, "For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. 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. 5:17–19 ESV).

You are made righteous in Christ through the forgiveness of your sins. You are victorious in Him who lived a perfect life as your substitute! As the hymn stanza reads, "Now rise, faint hearts, be resolute; This man is Christ, our substitute! He was baptized in Jordan's stream, Proclaimed Redeemer, Lord supreme."<sup>3</sup>

Being our Substitute and winning the victory over Satan involved not only Jesus overcoming the temptations of the devil and living a perfect life according to God's Law,

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<sup>2</sup> Francis C. Rossow, *Gospel Handles* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2001), 27.

<sup>3</sup> Text: © 1993 James P. Tiefel. Used by permission: LSB Hymn License no. 110000752

but also His giving up His life into death so that we might be saved from God's wrath and the punishment for all our sins and fallenness. As Satan in the wilderness tempted Jesus as the Son of God, so the devil would again hold up that temptation to Him at the end of His earthly ministry. While on the cross, Jesus was taunted, "Let him save Himself, if He is the Son of God" (Luke 23:35).

"If you are the Son of God, let's find out what kind of Son you are," the devil sneered once again. And He found out. Jesus was faithful in His life and in His death. In Gethsemane Jesus prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him" (Luke 22:42–44 ESV). Served by His angel after His time in the wilderness, the Son of God is served once more before His Passion and death for the sins of all people. He willingly, lovingly, and graciously went to the death of the cross to pay for our sins and sinfulness. Jesus shed His blood, purchasing with it our forgiveness and eternal life. And in His triumphant resurrection the devil, the world, and the flesh lie in defeat. Their powers are vanquished. Christ has fulfilled the will of the Father in winning salvation for the world with His perfect life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection.

Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς Νικᾷ! Jesus Christ is the Victor!

And His victory is your victory. You have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit through the Gospel Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper gives to you the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation Jesus won for you. He gives you the very righteousness of Christ and the strength of His Gospel to overcome the temptations of the devil, the world, and the flesh. Jesus' victory is yours now through faith. You are "more

than conquerors" through Him (Rom. 8:37). It is in this victory of Christ that you also pray in the Lord's Prayer, "and lead us not into temptation." This you pray because of the assurance that you are victorious in Christ, ever certain that God guards and keeps you so that the devil, the world, and the sinful nature may not deceive or mislead you. Although attacked by these things, you are able to stand firm in Christ through faith, trusting that by His grace and Spirit, you will finally overcome them and win the victory.

Jesus has won the victory. Jesus Christ is the Victor! By grace through baptismal faith, you are victorious with your Lord and Savior! His victory is your victory unto life everlasting. Amen.