

Luke 4:1-13

W-A-R - War. War is probably not something you and your friends like to **talk** about, or even **hear** about. But in our sermon today, I'm going to talk about **fighting** in a war - not a war against **Iraq**, or **Afghanistan**, or any **other** individual country. But rather, I'd like to talk about the **spiritual** war in which we are **all** involved. This is a war which is fought **within ourselves**. It's a **battle** that **continually** rages on, between the **new person** which God has made us to be through our **baptism**; and the **sinful nature** which we were **born** with - a nature that wants us to believe the **devil** and all his **lies**. Whether we **like** it or **not**, we are all **forced** to **fight** in this war each and every day. So, it's important for us to make sure that we **fight** this war in the way **God** wants it to be fought. Today, as we look at **Jesus** and His 40-day long encounter with **Satan** in the wilderness, we see how Jesus **triumphed** in His war against the devil, and we also learn what His triumph means for **us**, as we continue to fight **our** battles against Satan and his temptations every day.

The events in our text occurred at the **beginning** of Jesus' public ministry. We read that after He was baptized, He was led **by the Spirit** into the desert. This is where Jesus would begin to **prepare** Himself for the three long, difficult years of **public ministry** that lay ahead for Him. We read, "*For **forty days** he was tempted by the devil. He **ate nothing** during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.*" Wow, **40 days** without **any** food. I know how hungry **I** feel even if I only miss **one meal**. The hunger affects **more** than just your **body**. It affects your **personality** and your **emotions** as well. This forty-day **fast** would have left Jesus physically and mentally **vulnerable**, and what made things even **more** difficult is that Jesus spent those forty days going into **battle** against His ancient **enemy**, the **devil**. Although there are only **3 temptations** mentioned in our text, they are not the **only** temptations Jesus faced during that time. It's probable that what is listed for us are just **3 kinds** of temptations, and that the devil was **constantly** tempting and accusing Jesus **throughout** that 40 day period.

These were **real** temptations too. We can clearly see that the kind of temptations which the devil presented to Jesus were potentially the most **effective** temptations he could have used. The devil is very **smart**, and he's very **sneaky**. He made his **first** temptation seem like something which was totally **harmless**. He simply told Jesus to turn a stone into **bread** in order to satisfy His **hunger**. And after 40 days without food our text tells us, "*he was hungry.*" As the all-powerful Son of God, Jesus certainly had the **power** to change stones into bread. But that was **not** the way His divine power was supposed to be **used**. Jesus was to use His

almighty power to do the will of **God** - and in this case, **God's will** was for Jesus to be **hungry**, and to show His complete dependence on the heavenly **Father** and His **Word** for sustenance. Matthew tells us that's exactly what Jesus **did** when He said, "***It Is Written**, 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'*" Strike **one** for the devil.

His **second** temptation was also something which human beings would be very **interested** in. The devil showed Jesus all the **kingdoms** of the world, and told Him that all their **splendor** and **authority** could be **His**, if He would only **worship** him. That **seems** like a **huge amount** to offer, for such a **small** act. But of course, it was just a **lie**. The kingdoms of the world **don't** belong to the devil - they belong to God the **Father**, and the heavenly **Father** would be giving all authority over those kingdoms to **Jesus** after He **completed** His work of saving all mankind. But what the **devil** was offering in this **temptation** was a **shortcut**. In **God's** plan, Jesus had to endure the suffering and shame of the **cross** before He would ascend to His position of **power** and **authority**. But the **devil** was offering a way to **bypass** all that **pain** and **suffering**, and **still** receive the **power**. It was a very **cunning** lie - a lie which Jesus again saw through. He said, "***It Is Written**, 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him **only**.'*" Strike **two** for the devil.

And finally, in the **third** temptation, the devil tried to get Jesus to **doubt** the **protection** of His Father in heaven. The devil took Jesus to a high place in the temple and, in essence, said to Jesus, "If You **trust** Your **Father** so much, throw Yourself **down**. He'll take **care** of You, **won't** He? Isn't that what He **said** in His Word?" Of course, that was another **lie**, and Jesus recognized that throwing Himself off the top of the **temple** would be putting God to the **test** - something which God's Word tells us **not** to do. Strike **three** for the devil - so he **left** until **another** opportunity for tempting Jesus would present itself.

Think for a moment about how **difficult** these temptations were for Jesus. The **combination** of Jesus' **physical** and **emotional** state, together with these **crafty** temptations of the devil, would have been nearly **impossible** for Jesus to **deal with** - that is, **if** Jesus had only been a **man**. But thankfully, we know that Jesus is **more** than just a man. He is a **perfect** man, and He is also true **God** - a combination which was impossible for the **devil** to overcome, even with the best efforts he could muster.

That's what makes Jesus so **different** from you and me. We, too, face temptations every day, and just like it was with **Jesus**, the devil knows the best **times** and the most effective **ways** to tempt us. He knows our **personality**. He

knows the **emotional** state we are in. He knows when we are at our **weakest**. And **that** is when he **attacks**. We've seen it **happen** over and over again in our lives. The devil is so **efficient** at exploiting our **weaknesses** to lead us into sin - whether they are sins of **pride**, or **greed**, or **alcohol** and **drug** abuse, or **sexual** sins, and the list goes on and on. The devil **knows** that when we are physically **tired**, mentally **worn out**, and emotionally **drained**, those are the times when his temptations become all the more **alluring** for us.

If we rely on our **own** strength to fight off these temptations, or if we rely on our own **willpower** and human **reason** to try and defeat the devil, we are going to **fail**, and fail **miserably**. We can be so easily **deceived** by the devil as he makes his temptations seem so **common**, and **reasonable**, and **satisfying** for us. If we depend on **our** strength, **our** wisdom, and **our** logic, we will **lose**, and the devil's **temptations** will soon give way to **sin**. It seems like a never-ending **cycle**. So how can we **break** the cycle? How do we **resist** the devil and all of his lies?

Well, first of all, we need to recognize that they **are lies**. **Everything** the devil presents to us is either an **outright lie**, or a **twisting** of the truth. His promises can **never** be **trusted**. The **real truth** only comes from the words and promises of **God**. Jesus **showed** us what we need to **do** in the way **He** resisted the devil's temptations. In every instance Jesus countered the devil's temptations with the **Word of God**. He replied, "***It Is Written***." Jesus knew the Word of God **perfectly**, and He also knew how to **apply** it in every situation. That knowledge was put to very **good use** in the wilderness. It didn't matter what His own hungry **body** or His own weary **emotions** were telling Him, because Jesus knew what His heavenly **Father** had **promised** Him. Jesus knew what was **written**, and He continued to **hold on** to those words and promises of God. Consequently, there was **nothing** the devil could do in **response**, and He was thoroughly **defeated** every time.

Of course, this 40-day **blitz** was just one small **part** of Jesus' encounters with the devil and his lies. But every time the devil tried to **derail** God's plan of salvation, Jesus **triumphed**, as only Jesus **could**. And of course His **ultimate** triumph over the devil came when Jesus totally **crushed** the power of Satan on the **cross**. There the words "***It Is Written***" were **replaced** with the words, "***It is finished***." There Jesus showed Himself to be the world's **Redeemer** as He **atoned** for the sins of the world. **Everything** written in the Scriptures about the salvation of the world had been **accomplished** by the one **perfect** man and Son of **God**, **Jesus Christ**.

If we want to be successful in **our** war with the devil, we need to look to **Jesus**, who **defeated** the **devil** in our place. We need to see that **His** triumph over the devil is also **our own** triumph by **faith** in Jesus. We need to put our trust in the words and promises of **God** - **not** in the lies and deceptions of the **devil**. Then when the devil tries to **accuse** us and **condemn** us, we can simply say, ***“It Is Written - There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”***

That doesn't mean that once we have a few Bible passages **memorized**, our struggle with the devil will be **over**. He will **continue** to attack us. He will find **new** and even **more** clever ways to try and lead us astray. And, there will be times when we will **fall**. That's the way life **is** on this side of eternity. It will **always** be a **struggle**. But thanks be to God, we know how the struggle **ends** - it ends in **victory** because of our Lord **Jesus**.

The season of **Lent** is a time when our struggle with **sin** and **temptation** is shown very **clearly**. But we won't be spending the entire season of Lent looking into our **own** lives and seeing our **sin**. We'll also be spending time looking at how **Jesus** fought **His** battle against the devil. It begins this week in the **wilderness**. It will end **six weeks** from now at the **cross** and the **empty** tomb. May God bless each of us throughout this Lenten season, as we continue to wage **war** against devil, and as we realize that together with **Jesus**, we **can** and **will** gain the eternal **victory**. Amen.