



Free Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
in South Africa

## Sermon- Sunday Invocavit (RH4) 2018

*Temptations! From where?  
Who can help?*



St. John's Lutheran Parish  
Shelly Beach

### • **The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Mark 1, 9-15:**

• <sup>ESV</sup> <sup>9</sup> In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

• <sup>10</sup> And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opening and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

• <sup>11</sup> And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

• <sup>12</sup> The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.

• <sup>13</sup> And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

• <sup>14</sup> Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,

• <sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

• **Let us pray:** *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, let Your Word be a light in our hearts so that we will understand temptations and learn to flee to Christ when they come! Amen.*

### • **Dear Beloved of the Lord!**

• Who doesn't know temptations? That would only be possible if one didn't know anything about the Law of God. The Epistle reading gives a good description of what happens when we are tempted [James 1,14-15]: *"... each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."*

• It is interesting and important that we realise, a temptation to sin does not come from God. And the Word of God puts the blame first and foremost before our own hearts door. Your temptations start with your desires, in yourself. That is also true for Christians! Christians are not excluded from temptations starting in our own evil desires in us!

• This is something one needs to highlight in a time when people are not willing to take responsibility for their sins. In our days it has become like an epidemic that

everyone is always the victim. When someone did something wrong, it was because of their upbringing or because of traditionalism, or liberalism, or Apartheid or because of Communism or because of the government, or because of the influence of my peers at school, or because anything and everyone, except I myself! Excuses. Since God asked Adam, 'how do you know you are naked' and Adam pointed away from himself to his wife saying, 'the woman you gave me', and the woman pointed to the serpent, since that day the blame game started.

- This phenomenon that we like to see ourselves as victims of our past, or of the present or of our context is simply crushed by the Word of God. The sword of the Word kills this idea at its root. No, says the Word of God, temptations come from your own desires! Its you, its me. At the deepest existence of my self- that is where these temptations come from! Its inborn. We are born with these desires. Even the little babies have these desires embedded in themselves. And as they grow older, these will come out and cause the youth or adult to fall into temptations.

- The point is, these desires are already in us. They don't need to come in from the outside. To be sure, many evil influences reach us and affect us badly, but that is because they find resonance in us. They are welcomed by our desires. They awake our desires to feed them and let them grow strong. If we wouldn't have these desires in us, the ones coming in from the outside would not affect us.

- And the proof we have is Jesus being tempted in the wilderness! And we see that this account is interwoven, is closely connected with His Baptism by John the Baptist. Jesus is baptised by John, the heavens are split open and the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove and into Him, reports Mark. God the Father said to Jesus, *"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased."* This refers to Jesus being the true Son of God, having the same nature as God, and it refers to Jesus being the son of God, namely being Israel, as Israel was also called the son of God.

- In other words, Jesus is the first inhabitant of the new Israel. He was baptised just like Israel, submitted Himself under the Law of God, but not because He sinned, but because He became the Lamb of God that would carry away the sins of the world.

- And immediately after His Baptism, He was expelled, by the Spirit into the

wilderness. So, now we have Israel in the wilderness again. This time the new Israel, that is Jesus, the son of God, will remain in the wilderness for forty days to be tempted by satan! Now, we know from the Gospel of Matthew that satan did tempt Jesus with everything he had, comprehensively. But, satan lost that battle. This time the new son of God, the new member of Israel, would not fall for satan's deceptions.

• Whilst Eve and then Adam failed and the nation of Israel likewise in their forty years in the wilderness, again and again, Jesus conquered the temptations of satan. Then it says, He was with the wild beasts and the angels served Him. Here already we see, what's coming: paradise restored.

• This is significant, here we have someone who knows what we go through, He was tempted like us! But He did not give in!

• His desire was something else! His desire was for us to hear and to receive the Gospel [15]: *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."*

• Here is the secret of conquering any temptations: If your desire is towards the kingdom of God, if it is purely fixed on the kingdom of God, satan's deceptions will find no receptive resonances in your heart!! However, if your desires are not absolutely pure, there is a loophole which he can and will use to ignite your desires!

• This, dear congregation is what the Ten Commandments of God expose as we study God's will, we have many loopholes in our desires. They are not pure. Romans 7 teaches us, that when someone points us towards a specific commandment, our desires towards that sin tend to erupt in us.

• This thing that Jesus says, that we are the poor in the Spirit is not just a saying, is not just all in theory, that is what we find in practice. That is what our life is. Humanity has collectively and each one for himself or herself a huge addiction towards sin! This is no exaggeration, this is by no means an over-statement. This is also not some cheap trick just so that I can cheaply sell the "gospel" to you, as many claim.

• Investigate for yourself. Try it out yourself: love your neighbour as yourself, as

Jesus teaches the contents of this commandment in His sermon of the mount. Look at history. No political system works, has ever worked. Its not the systems which need adjustments, its those implementing the systems who are the problem.

• Therefore, there is really only one solution for mankind to ever reach paradise again. That is, by going to the only One, who has conquered the power of evil desires, once and for all.

• And the exceptionally good news is, He comes to us, with the kingdom of God, as the kingdom of God, restored Israel, as the new temple of God and with His mighty Word He leads us to repentance by saying to us: repent, and so we repent of all our sins. Its futile to want to remain with our sins. And He says, believe in the Good News: the kingdom of God is here. Today, now, here, receive Me and what I have achieved for you.

• Jesus renews your new spirit. He feeds the spirit He has given you, when you were baptised, who longs for the kingdom of God and for a life when all evil will be finally removed from our hearts.

• Until that day we need to be fed the bread from heaven, daily. Our daily life should start with hearing the Word of God and should end with hearing the Word of God and receiving our daily portion of forgiveness. And at least once a week, it is Jesus' Will that we assemble as Body of Christ, around the means of Grace, which He wants to pour out on us and into us, to save us from all evil. That is His good and gracious desire for all people. To God, be glory, forever and ever! **Amen.**

• *Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. **Amen.*** <sup>(ESV Eph 3,20-21)</sup>