

“Man Shall Not Live by Bread Alone.”

(Luke 4:1-13)

To understand the full meaning of what Christ did by going out into the wilderness, we need to set the stage a little bit. This is the first thing Jesus did after His Baptism in the Jordan River. He begins His public ministry and then spends 40 days by Himself in the wilderness. Why would He do this? Shouldn't He be preaching, teaching, or calling His disciples?

It seems like a waste of time and does nothing but open the door for Satan to tempt the Lord and put our salvation at risk. However, it was not a waste of time, but was necessary for our salvation to be complete.

When Adam sinned and ate of the forbidden tree, he was cast out of Paradise and sent into the wilderness. When Christ comes to take away our sin, fulfill the Law, and restore creation, He departs the paradise of heaven, goes out to the wilderness, and does not eat. The Second Adam is not like the first.

Adam was not content with the place in life God had given to him. He wanted to be equal to God -- knowing the difference between good and evil. Christ, being true God, as St. Paul says in his letter to the Philippians, “does not consider equality with God something to be

grasped, but made himself nothing; taking the very nature of a servant . . . And being found in appearance as man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death -- even death on a cross.”

The Second Adam had to undo the damage of the First Adam. He takes on Adam’s punishment and goes to the wilderness. Adam refused to humble himself before the Lord – Christ willingly suffered humiliation. Satan conquered Adam when he ate of the tree. Jesus conquers Satan in the wilderness when he refused to eat. And when Jesus wins the final victory over Satan, there is a tree involved in that also -- the tree of the cross.

Satan comes to Jesus with his lies and half-truths, with his false promises that he can’t fulfill. The First Adam listened and believed the false promises of Satan. “If you eat, you won’t die. You will be like God.” The Second Adam did not yield to the desires of His stomach, and He repeatedly rebuked Satan with the Word of God -- which is the greatest and most nourishing bread.

Jesus going out to the wilderness is also reminiscent of the 40 years the Israelites spent in the wilderness. The Israelite’s lack of faith and their fear of not having sufficient food caused them to repeatedly murmur and rebel against God. Jesus does not succumb to the desires of His stomach. He lives by the Word of God, as Moses did on the mountain 40 days without food or Elijah did while fleeing from Queen Jezebel, also going 40 days without food.

This is not to say that fasting for 40 days is a dieting style to be

advocated for all of God's people, but in certain extreme cases, God has sustained His children without food or water for long periods of time. But this doesn't mean they weren't hungry.

And the temptation for Christ to recreate the miracle of manna in the wilderness is powerful. I get grumpy if I have to skip one meal. But as the Second Adam and as the Savior of Israel, it was Christ's place to not be like the Israelites and grumble about His empty stomach, and to not be like the First Adam and eat the food suggested by Satan.

Christ answered Satan three times from the book of Deuteronomy. He was nourished by the Word of God. And it was satisfying. Like I said last week, it is Satan who whispers in our ear, "The Word of God; Sacraments; you're going to be satisfied with that?" The father of lies wants you to think that what we do here is no big deal.

In the wilderness, we see that Christ came to fulfill all things and to give us an example to live by. We need to understand how satisfying the Word of God is. We need to be prepared because our lives can turn from paradise to wilderness in a hurry. And our trek through the wilderness can sometimes last a long time.

As God's children, we look to the example of Christ and know that the Word of God will sustain us. It is more nourishing than any meal, and is our source of power and strength to fight back the devil and his lies and temptations.

When we are tired and hungry, when we are worn out from the pain and sickness and death of this world, this is when Satan comes at us the hardest. He is always looking for that “opportune time”, as he was with Jesus.

But as Jesus tells His disciples, there is no room for the devil in your heart when you are filled with the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit comes to us and strengthens us through the Word and in the Sacraments. As I said last week, this is where we get to experience a “little bit of heaven on earth.”

We gather here in God’s House as living witnesses that “Man does not live by bread alone.” With our confession of the creed, we echo the words, “Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.” And we gather as the community of believers and pray for strength that we do not “put the Lord [our] God to the test.”

We are Adam’s children. We repeatedly fail just as he did. But the Second Adam has come. He has restored all that sin had undone. Christ departed the glory of heaven and suffered in the wilderness. We suffer in the wilderness of this sinful world. It may be for 40 days. It may be another 40 years, but the glory of heaven is just on the horizon, and God’s Word will sustain us for as long as we need. Amen.