

Saint Thomas' of the Air Church
Lent I
February 21, 2021
rmcneely+

Get thee hence Satan

Today's Gospel is interesting from several points of view

It is the only place in the New Testament
where the devil makes a personal appearance.

It is the first place in the Bible that Jesus is referred to as The Son
of God.

You see, there were people then
and people now
who do not believe Jesus is the Son of God,
But Lucifer, God's fallen angel
has always known who Jesus is,
even if some of us do not.

The Gospel is, of course well placed, on this First Sunday in Lent
Because even by now,
only 4 days into Lent,
we know temptation; the false allurements of the devil.
We know that we are tempted
to break the discipline of our fast, our abstinence.
But temptation is not confined to the Lenten Season.

It was April 21st, 1918.

Over France.

Mor-lan-court Ridge actually.

Manfred Freiherr von Richthofen, who you might know better as the
Red Barron,

Was flying his tri wing bright red Fokker fighter

World War I was raging seven months before its end.

The Red Baron had flown many missions
And had brought down 80 aircraft
More than any other pilot of any country.
He was chasing Canadian Arthur Brown.
It would have been the Barron's 81st victory.
Brown was trying to evade and escape.
He flew near the ground and into Ally territory.
But the Barron was closing on him.
Then it happened.
Investigations would never determine the gun that fired the shot
But von Richthoffen was mortally wounded.
Later analysis would prove that the Barron had chased temptation
Too long
Too far, and
Too low into enemy territory.
And chasing temptation
Too long
Too far, and
Too low into enemy territory
Has caused the downfall of many good people.
And as with von Richthoffen
They are then caught
Unawares
by the consequences.
Sin takes us
Further than we ever wanted to go
Costs more than we were ever willing to pay
And hurts more than we could ever imagine it would.
And it all starts with how we handle the temptations we face.

Jesus' 40 day fast in the wilderness was near completion when
Satan, the tempter, appeared.
At the very time that Jesus was at His physically weakest point,
the devil chose to strike.

It was perhaps the devils best opportunity
to derail what was to happen.
Perhaps the last time
to corrupt our Lord
and prevent the salvation of mankind, three years hence.

The devil is like that,
cunning,
clever,
and murderously destructive
And so he is in our lives.

Modern man,
enlightened man,
educated and sophisticated man
scoffs at a real and embodied satan,
that he prowls our lives looking for whom he will devour.

Well, call me an ignorant fool,
but I have seen his work
and know to my soul
he is real
and a force at work in our world.
He must be pleased that the intellectual elites
deny his existence,
offering him the cover of anonymity within which to destroy.

One of the tactics I know of satan is that
the moments in our lives
that are of spiritual significance
draw his fire.

As you prepare and begin your Lenten discipline,
satan recognizes that
if unabated
you will grow closer to God
and a step further beyond his reach.

So he selects you
and acts now
to try to prevent it.

Moments in our lives of spiritual significance
are times when he targets us.

Our priests will tell you
that the time when they are the most consumed in pastoral
calls
is just before the Great Christian Holidays,
times when we step closer to God
at Christmas and at Easter.

You see my dear friends in Christ
We live in a time of battle
A battle that is waged every day
And particularly now
A battle for our souls
A battle between the devil and God
A battle over whether we are God's children
Or fodder for the devil's meal

It is a battle that we often cannot discern
We cannot see it clearly
We are often deaf to its shrieks, howls, screams and moans
We are deceived by the evil one and cannot sense it's bitter
taste

But make no mistake
 we are the prize to be won or lost;
 In the battle between good and evil.

We are forewarned to be on watch for the devil at times of spiritual
 significance in our lives. Times like these.
 So let us examine the temptations of Christ in the Wilderness
 For some understanding of the battle
 For how we may survive our own temptations.

Let's look at how satan wages the battle.

The attack is subtle
 But the result is profound
 He knows the physical vulnerability of Our Lord at the end of his
 food and drink fast.
 And so that is the point of the attack
 The place we are most vulnerable.

We must each of us beware of our individual vulnerability.
 Satan's weapon of choice
 For the battle for Jesus
 is scripture.
 In fact, an illusion to the 91st psalm
 Which he will use later
 He says Use your power,
 change this stone into bread

In fact, God does not want you to starve
 To become unable to carry out His mission
 He would want you to use your powers to save yourself so
 you may save mankind.

You can do it
 Change this stone into bread
 That you may live and serve God

Satan offers a corrupt means to achieve God's end.

Subtle.

Cunning

Deceptive

It worked in the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve

Condemning mankind to original sin

But Jesus will not be fooled

For us the means is every bit as important as the ends.

Jesus sees the trap, steps over it and cites Deuteronomy

The second telling of Moses

The entire passage is this; Moses lecturing the children of Israel:

And He humbled thee and suffered thee to hunger

And fed thee with manna, . . .

That He might make thee know

that man doth not live by bread only

but by every word that proceedeth

out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.

Point taken:

Those who have chosen Lenten disciplines involving food

And suffer hunger

Are learning that we do not live by food alone

But by every word of God.

Satan is defeated.

But satan is undaunted.

Next he tries to derail, deflect the power of the crucifixion and resurrection;

From a high place on the temple in Jerusalem

Satan suggests a demonstration of God's plan

Jump, and the angels will save you

Everyone will see the miracle and know that you are the Son
of God, the Messiah,

You will instantly achieve God's plan

A better

Faster

and far less painful means to His goal

He will love you for it.

You will be a hero

It's classic Satan

Trust me

I am one of you

Helping you and helping God

To achieve what God wants

The devil recites the 11th and 12th verse of the 91st Psalm:

“He shall give his angels charge over thee,
to keep thee in all thy ways.

They shall bear thee up in their hands

lest thou dash thy foot against a stone”

Leap, while all are looking

Make the demonstration

Show them who you are.

Jesus goes to Deuteronomy again;

It is written: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Do not set out a test of God.

He does not work that way.

There are no shortcuts fashioned by man to achieve the will of God

Sometimes it is the journey He puts before us

That is what makes us who God wills us to be

Sometimes that journey is hard

Point taken.

Satan tries one last time.

He offers Jesus the world.

Which the devil can deliver

Certainly today, we would have to say our world
 Is, by and large
 in the hands of the devil.
 Satan Offers Him that which God seeks
 That Jesus is King
 Jesus is the saviour
 He need only bow down and worship the devil
 And all will be achieved

Another deception
 Satan again professes to be an ally
 In disguise he seems innocuous
 He suggests a way
 That seems to be aligned with the good,
 With God
 A better, faster and easier way
 To achieve what God wants

Another corruption of the means by which God has chosen to
 achieve His ends.

Jesus goes back to Deuteronomy:
 Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God
 And Him only shalt thou serve

The epic battle was joined
 The combatants engaged
 Weapon drawn
 Forces unleashed
 But the forces of Good will always overcome the forces of evil.
 Last point taken.

Jesus warns:
 Satan get thee hence
 And the battle is won. For today.

Satan was again defeated.
But would be back
 To suffer his great defeat at Calvary
 At the cross
Where Jesus fulfilled the Mission
 Saved mankind
 And defeated evil

Lesson for us?
 Satan has no more power than
 We are willing to give him.

With God's help
 We will prevail
With God's help
 We will see eternal life
 Where there is no Satan
 Where there is no evil
We need only meet the temptation
 That will inexorably be put in our path

Get thee hence Satan