

## First Sunday in Lent - Invocabit - February 26, 2023

**Readings: Genesis 3: 1-21, Hebrews 4: 14-16, Matthew 4: 1-11**

### *Jesus Does Battle in Our Place*

In the Garden, man exalts himself to be a god in place of God (Gen. 3:1–21). He succumbs to the temptation of the devil, and eating of the forbidden fruit, he receives death. But in the sin-cursed wilderness, God humbles Himself to become man in place of man (Mt. 4:1–11). He does not eat but fasts and bears the onslaughts of the devil for us that we may be restored to life. Jesus stands as David in our place to do battle against the Goliath, Satan (1 Samuel 17:40–51). Though outwardly Jesus appears weak, yet He comes in the name of the Lord of hosts. He draws from the five smooth stones of the books of Moses and slings the Word of God. The stone sinks into the forehead, and the enemy falls. In Christ, we are victorious over the devil. Let us therefore not receive the grace of God in vain (2 Cor. 6:1–10), but seeing that we have a great High Priest, let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain help in time of need (Heb 4:14–16).

### **Sermon Transcript**

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

If you were here for Ash Wednesday and you were paying attention to the epistle, you'll notice that the epistle is pretty much the same as it was on Ash Wednesday. It's the same section of 2 Corinthians where Paul is commending himself and commending to the Corinthians to not have received the grace of God in vain. And we want to emphasize that again this Sunday because now is the time of salvation. We sang "Amazing Grace" at the very beginning. We sang "A Mighty Fortress is Our God". Why are these themes here today? Because this is the beginning of the end. The beginning of the beginning. I'm not quite sure how to describe it because we are looking with anticipation, even though Lent is a time of more somber reflection and we take out the alleluias. We don't sing the hymn of praise. We change things around a bit.

But still in just a few days, just a few weeks, we will be celebrating the culmination of the whole point of "God with us", of Jesus Christ being born on this world, and that is that He might come and die. But more than that, that He might rise from the dead to take away our sins. And for that we are eternally grateful, but we need to not receive this grace in vain. In other words, Paul wants us to understand the season that we are living in. What does he say? He says, "We put no obstacle in anyone's way so that no fault may be found in our ministry, but as servants, we commend ourselves in every way." And he is telling them what he has suffered. And by extension what we all are called to anticipate if we receive the grace of God and His salvation. We understand that there will be great endurance, affliction, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights and hunger. Sounds like a wonderful messaging for, "Hey, come and join us because this is what you have to look forward to." Well, the reason it is a joy is because we know the final outcome. We in this world are going to face hardships whether we believe in God or not. This world is full of trials and tribulations. It's just the way life is because of sin.

And we know that everybody is going to face the ultimate enemy at one point or another in our lives, and that is death itself. No one can escape it. It's coming for each and every one of us. So how do we face that? We face that by understanding that the strength of this world is not what is going to get us through. You have the story

of David here in the Old Testament and the typical story, David and Goliath, the small man versus the big guy, root for the underdog and everything. And we think this story is about David defeating Goliath, but that's not the story.

The story is about God giving David the victory by His grace. The story is that David did not put his trust in the power and might of this world. He put his trust in the power and might of God, which is His Word. See, Goliath not only insulted Israel and its armies, and that was bad enough. But Goliath said that not even God himself could protect the Israelites from his might and the might of the Philistines. And that challenge was accepted by God. And so while the rest of the Israelites, all the army, even the king, with all of his mighty armor, none of them were willing to defend God's Word. But David, this shepherd boy, heard the taunts of the Philistine and said, "Surely our God is big enough to handle this petty tyrant."

But he also did not rely upon the strength of man. Saul gave him his armor and said, "Here, put this on. This will protect you." David put on the armor and he said, "This isn't what's going to protect me." Took it off and relied on what had always protected him, and that was the Word of God. When Goliath taunts David and says, "I'm going to throw you to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field." David says very clearly, "Look, you're depending upon what your sword and your spear, your javelin." all the things that we would look at and go, yeah, I would depend on those things. They're pretty powerful. They often work especially with somebody who knows how to use them. But David says, "But with all that strength and all that might and all those weapons, I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts and the God of the armies of Israel whom you have defiled. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands."

It's not about David defeating Goliath and trusting in the strength of his own hand and the might of this world. It was David trusting the Word of God And trusting that the Word of God would take him through this trial and every other trial because nothing can stand against the Word of God. Even though we know that we are going to face challenges in this life. We're going to be persecuted for our faith. We are already beginning to be mocked for what we believe. We've had a government that has supported us in our freedoms of religion, but society is getting a little bit less tolerant of what we preach and teach.

So we do not put our hope in the strength of this world. We put our hope and our strength in the Word of God because everything except God is against us. In this world we have sin, we have trials, we have tribulations. The only thing that is going to carry us through is the Word of God, which is demonstrated very clearly by Jesus in the Gospel. Again, one of my favorite understatements ever made. "Jesus was led by the spirit in the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting for 40 days and 40 nights, He was hungry." Yeah, yeah, of course He was hungry. 40 days, 40 nights without food, I'd be starving. I'd be famished. I'd be willing to do almost anything for a morsel of bread. And yet what does it say? He was hungry.

So the tempter came at a time when He was most weak and says, "Look, you are the Son of God. You can turn these stones to bread." And how did Jesus defeat Satan? Not with logic or reason, but with the Word of God. Now, if I'd been told that I could turn stones into bread, I probably would've done it because at that time, I would've done almost anything again for that bread. Yet Jesus was sustained by the Word of God. Now, I think this also has more to say to us than just Jesus resisted the temptation.

It's also a call for us. What sustains us in our trials and our tribulations when we are wanting the bread, when we are wanting the things of this world that satisfy, when we are wanting the comforts or anything that is going to make our life better or easier or even just good and we don't get it. Does that mean that God has

abandoned us? Does that mean His Word isn't actually for us? No. It means that we are more than our bellies. It means that we are more than our wants and our desires. It means that we are called to have God's Word as our primary motivation for all that we say and do, even if that means facing trials and persecutions, imprisonment, and even death itself.

Because we know that every word that comes from the mouth of God gives us life. We might be facing death in this world, but we still have life. Because He is the God of this world, the God of death and the God of life again in Christ. So our daily bread will not sustain for all eternity. But the Word of God will. And then Satan brings Him to the temple and said, "Throw yourself down. Did God say about the angels that they will bear You up and they will not let Your foot strike against the stone?" And Satan is quoting Scripture, so he is like, "Yeah, this is what Scripture says. Come on."

But Jesus, of course, is not deceived. He uses other Scripture. In other words, just because we quote some platitude from Scripture, we have to understand the context. We have to understand what God really is saying, not what we want His Word to say. We're not called to test God, and sometimes that may be, "God, I don't get this. I don't think this is right. I don't like where I am in this world right now. I don't like the situation I am in, but I know that You are still with me and I will trust You even if it doesn't go the way I want it to because I know You have my best interests in mind and You will never leave me nor forsake me."

Then finally, after failing these two things, he comes and shows Jesus all the kingdoms of this world, all the nations and all the principalities, and he says, "All You got to do is bow down and worship me, and I will give them all to You." Now, whether Satan could or could not actually give all the kingdoms to Jesus is a debated point, and then that's not really what I want to try and figure out today. The key is His kingdom is not of this world. Satan was literally giving Him power and authority to be able to make the rules of the land, to basically say, "Y'all are going to be Christians and you're all going to follow me." And having the might and the power and the authority to do that.

But He knew very clearly that that was again focused on the temporary thing, the power of this world. The nations of this world are temporary. The things that are eternal is the Word of God, and His kingdom and His kingdom will last for all eternity, and we are now in His kingdom. We are in His embassy right now. We are hearing His Word. We are be strengthened by His Word in the embassy of God where the people of God, the kingdom of God, gathered together to be strengthened and nourished for the trials and tribulations and hardships and everything else that is going on in the society around us. Because we do not receive the Word of God in vain, but we are strengthened by it. We receive His gifts in the waters of baptism. We are restored and renewed.

In the body and blood of Jesus Christ we are given nourishment for our journey and through His Word, we are assured that He will never forsake us and that He has defeated Satan. He has defeated the sin in this world. He has even defeated death in itself. So let us put our trust in the king of this world, the king of death itself. He has conquered death and the king of everlasting life, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. So that no matter what may come, we may stand trusting that the Word of God will defeat all of our enemies for His glory and for our good.

May His grace and His mercy and His peace be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.