

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, March 23, 2021
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“SERVE HIM ONLY

READING: Luke 4:5-8 – The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”

Numbers 14:1-4 – That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt?” And they said to each other, “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”

I told you last week that we were going to visit the Temptations of Christ this week and next. And I told you that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted because he was the True Israel, Israel reduced to One, the One who would be faithful and trust his heavenly Father against all odds. So in today’s text, Satan comes with a universal temptation, and one that is a clever mirror-image of Israel’s temptation and failure in the desert.

Israel was led by God from Mt. Sinai directly to the Promised Land. Twelve men, one from each tribe, were detailed to spy out the land and report back to Moses and the people. This they did. They saw how good and spacious and fruitful Canaan was. They saw how beautiful and desirous it was. And they saw descendants of Anak (giants!) and Amalekites and Hittites and Jebusites and Amorites and the Canaanites, oh my! And they were afraid! They had the Promised Land in sight, poised to go over the Jordan and take it for their own. Everything God had promised was right there in their hands, and they quailed and cried and complained and decided Egypt would be a far better choice than this place God was offering them. How sad!

When Satan comes to Jesus, he offers up the mirror-image of this test. Where God had offered Israel their inheritance and heritage, Satan offers Jesus glitz and glamour and power. All the nations laid out at his feet with all their splendor and all their earthly delights. And all it will take is a little kneel down before the devil; just a little worship, that’s all! Where Israel had lost courage and fell into distrust of God because of the other nations, Satan now offers Jesus control over them all with just a little trust in Satan’s power and authority. A small price to pay, right?

Oh, how many people over the ages have been seduced by this same temptation! The heck with God! Go for the gusto! Grab power wherever it exists; rule over others and be great! Use what the world offers for your own pleasure, your own purposes, according to your own

will. Maybe you can't rule the world, but you can rule over your spouse or your brother or your employees. You can grab your little piece of the world by the tail and make it your little fiefdom. It's good to be the king, even if your kingdom is only a double-wide!

Jesus did not fall for Satan's ploy. Jesus knows at least two things: Earthly power and glory last only a short time in the scheme of things, and Satan doesn't own squat! What Satan is hoping is that Jesus will trade away his birthright as the only Son of God for the jaded splendor of earthly power and riches. Jesus sees right through Satan's offer and will have none of it. "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only," he replies, and Satan has no rejoinder. It's the truth, and he has no means to overcome it.

We can be similarly tempted with what the world can offer. We can forget to be charitable in order to have the bigger car or the bigger house or the newest widget. We can parade our latest fashions or our shiny new jewelry or our brand-new NBA sneakers, and puff ourselves up so others will notice. Or, we can forego some of those things if it will enable us to spend more time, talent, or treasure for the good of others and the increase of God's kingdom.

Israel failed the test. They failed to trust the One who had brought them out of bondage, through the desert, and right to the verge of Jordan. Instead they thought with nostalgia (can you imagine!) back on their days in Egypt. Jesus passed the test with flying colors. We can do the same by remembering that God owns EVERYTHING, we own NOTHING, but all we have is a gift of grace given by the One who created us, redeemed us, and sanctifies us now. Let us worship the Lord our God and serve him only. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

1) **WEDNESDAY LENTEN SERVICES:** Our series is entitled, "The Road to Perdition". We will walk beside Jesus as he experiences the various events that lead to the Judgement Hall and the Cross on Good Friday. This week we'll conclude our series by being humbled as Jesus washes the Disciples' feet. Join us on Wednesday at 7:00 PM.

2) **HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES:** Maundy Thursday is April 1 and Good Friday on April 2, both of them at 7:00 PM with Communion on Thursday and the Service of Darkness and the Burial of the Christ Banner on Friday. Easter this year will mark a return to normalcy with Sunrise Service at 6:30 and Divine Services with Communion at 8:00 and 10:30. Consider attending the services in person, especially if you've had your vaccinations.