

## Mark 1:12-15

<sup>12</sup>The Spirit immediately sent Jesus out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup>He was in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels were serving him.

<sup>14</sup>After John was put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. <sup>15</sup>“The time is fulfilled,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near! Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

## Temptation

### I.

#tempted. #preached.

I think the Evangelist Mark would have been good at coming up with hashtags for the Twitter-verse, or maybe 10 second taglines for news stories. Mark’s gospel account is considerably shorter than the others. He leaves out a lot of details the other writers include. Perhaps he figured that if you wanted all the other details, you could go to those other gospel accounts and get them. He wrote very concisely—boiling everything down to its essence. Yet Mark’s account gives some very vivid and memorable quotes from the life of Jesus and confessions of faith in Jesus by the people surrounding him.

The words before our text dealt with Jesus’ baptism by John at the River Jordan. The next words out of his pen sound like one of those 10-second taglines or an expanded hashtag: “The Spirit immediately sent Jesus out into the wilderness” (Mark 1:12, EHV). Without even being dry yet from the waters of baptism, the Holy Spirit ships Jesus off into the wilderness to be tempted.

The hashtag nature of Mark’s reporting strikes a chord of urgency into the message. Why? Why was it so imperative that Jesus get out there for a bout of temptation so quickly?

So many people give a mere hashtag response to the question: “What did Jesus do for you?” Their answer: “He died on the cross for my sins.” It’s not an incorrect answer, but it *is* incomplete. Jesus did much, much more for you than die on the cross to pay for your sins.

In order to even *get* to that point, Jesus had to be the perfect, unblemished sacrifice for sin we talked about in the sermon for Ash Wednesday. That means that Jesus had to live a perfect life before he could die an innocent death for you.

The fact that you can get *that* out in a quick hashtag response doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t stop and think about what that entails. What did it take for Jesus to live a perfect and innocent life?

One of the things it took was the Holy Spirit sending Jesus into the wilderness immediately after his baptism in which he was anointed as the promised Savior of the world to face the devil and do battle with him. The other gospel accounts give a few particulars of the 40-day trial. Near the end of that time, Satan tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread, since he had had nothing to eat. When Jesus countered that one with the Word of God, Satan shot right back. Hey, Jesus, the Father just called you the Son whom he loves at that baptism thing. If he loves you so much, surely he will do *anything* to protect you. Throw yourself down from the top of the temple mount; the God who loves you will make sure nothing bad happens to you. Jesus countered his attack with the Word of God again. Satan shot back, offering Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and all their splendor if Jesus would just worship Satan. Jesus already *had* what Satan tempted him with. He replied: “Go away, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only” (Matthew 4:10,

EHV).

While the other two who wrote about this incident concentrate on several spectacular temptations, Mark is content to report: “He was in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by Satan” (Mark 1:13, EHV). It wasn’t just 40 days in the wilderness without food, at the end of which Satan tempted him with three memorable and spectacular temptations—he was tempted by Satan for 40 days.

## II.

What do you think the temptations were like? What are *your* temptations like when you are in a beaten down and battered condition—at the very end of your rope? How long does it take you to question God and his wisdom and his mercy? How long does it take for you to say: “If God were really there, if he were really so merciful and compassionate, he wouldn’t let this thing happen to me.” How long before you wonder, “Why does God let bad things happen to good people?” all the while forgetting that, since a sinful human nature lives inside each one of us, there really aren’t *any* “good people.”

But it isn’t just when you are bruised and battered and beaten down by life that you experience temptation, is it? What *are* the temptations *you* face every day? The writer to the Hebrews says: “We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15, EHV).

In 10 days, Pastor Timmerman from Otsego will be telling you more about this verse in our Midweek Lenten series. Until then, let’s look at the connection between our text today and this verse from Hebrews. Our text says Jesus was “tempted by Satan” (Mark 1:13, EHV). The passage from Hebrews says that he was “Tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15, EHV).

“Tempted in every way we are.” We don’t mind so much thinking about Jesus being tempted by some of the mundane, prosaic sins. He was tempted to steal? Okay. To curse? We can certainly understand how he might have been tempted to curse at the Pharisees when they were bothering him. But then some of the more uncomfortable sins come up. If he tempted Jesus to *curse* the Pharisees, certainly Satan would have tempted him to boil over with violent rage and hatred toward them, too. How about all those sexual sins Jesus spoke against? Jesus was Tempted in every way we are. Satan tempted Jesus to commit adultery? Yes. And he tempted him with other sexual sins, too. Pornography. Lust. Homosexual behavior.

In the Commandments God said: “You shall not covet” (Exodus 20:17, NIV84). That should have made it clear to people that, while visible sins are in words and actions, sins can also be committed in the heart. Jesus clarified that this isn’t just about a lust for *things*, but *any* kind of sinful thought. He said: “I tell you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28, EHV).

## III.

Mark doesn’t give the laundry list of temptations. #TemptedBySatan. Very concise. Use your imagination. You know some of the temptations you face every day. They were probably in there. #TemptedInEveryWayJustAsWeAre.

Yet he did not sin. What was *that* like? Can you *imagine* the brunt force of that temptation? Temptation doesn’t really last all that long for us. We are tempted. We cave. We sin. It’s often the space of only a few heartbeats between the temptation and the sin. Jesus *did not sin!* Not one fall. Not one falter. Not one stumble. Jesus endured the onslaught of Satan’s temptations to the fullest measure—far beyond what we have ever

endured.

Satan threw everything he had at Jesus because he knew that if Jesus made just one tiny misstep, we would all be doomed. Lost eternally. Destined to share his sentence to eternity in hell. The little battles with us are easy. This was the battle that would win the war. Every resource Satan had went into this battle.

Mark records the end of the battle simply: “Angels were serving him” (Mark 1:13, EHV). At the end of his grueling ordeal the angels came. Luke adds this detail: “When the Devil had finished every temptation, he left him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13, EHV).

That’s it. After one short paragraph about the 40-day ordeal, Mark is off to report about Jesus preaching in Galilee, after John the Baptist had been put in prison. Mark doesn’t bother with one word about the calling of the first disciples, or Jesus’ first miracle at the wedding at Cana, or the first time he cleansed the temple, or any number of other details from Jesus’ early ministry.

#### IV.

The next paragraph is well into Jesus’ Galilean ministry. Mark reports: “After John was put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. <sup>15</sup>‘The time is fulfilled,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God has come near! Repent, and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14-15, EHV).

Jesus kept every part of God’s Moral Law perfectly in your place in preparation to be the necessary sacrifice on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins. At this First Sunday in the Season of Lent he tells us that the time has come to believe in the work he came to do. Repent of all those sins of thought, word, and deed that have permeated every facet of your life. Repent and believe, because he has already faced all those temptations for you.

Not only do you repent and believe, come boldly in prayer to your Lord Jesus when temptation threatens you. Know that he has already endured far greater in your place, and will give you the strength you need to get through those temptations. When you fall, flee to the Lord Jesus who has already won the victory over those temptations. Those who are in Christ Jesus cannot be harmed by the temptations of Satan. He has withstood them for you. He has paid for your failures to withstand. Repent and believe. Repent and return to him who has won this battle for you.

Pray for strength. In his own prayer Jesus puts into your mouth the very words of his own temptation experience: “Lead us not into temptation.” We pray those words just before we receive the Supper of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus, who resisted temptation for us. Jesus is here for you in temptation—to help you resist, and when you fall, to lift you up and restore you.

#ThankGod! Thank God Jesus was tempted by Satan. Thank God he withstood. Thank God he went to the cross with the load of our failed temptations and paid for them. Thank God we repent and believe, and will one day enjoy eternal life with him. Thank God he gave us Mark’s brief synopsis to keep the short and sweet of all these details before our eyes in the Lenten Season. Amen.