

1st Sunday of Lent C Gospel

Gospel

Lk 4:1-13

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil.

He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry.

The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

Jesus answered him, "It is written, *One does not live on bread alone.*"

Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant.

The devil said to him, "I shall give to you all this power and glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. All this will be yours, if you worship me."

Jesus said to him in reply,

"It is written: *You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.*"

Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him,

"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: *He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,* and:

With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone."

Jesus said to him in reply,

"It also says, *You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.*"

When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

Jerome Biblical Commentary

53 (D) The Temptation (4:1-13). In the baptismal scene as well as in the genealogical table, Jesus appears as the son of God, commissioned for the messianic-eschatological work of bringing men to the fullness of divine sonship. The temptation scene now makes it clear that Jesus is fully human too. As man, he undertakes his work in full obedience to the Father (cf. Heb 2:10, 18). Mk (1:12-13) has the shortest account of the temptation; in this earliest narrative there is already a strong doctrinal orientation. Jesus relives the Exodus experience of Israel in the desert (see Dt 8:2). By going out into the desert, a desolate land inhabited by demons and ferocious beasts (Lv 16:22; Tb 8:3; Zech 5:11), Jesus subdues the hostile powers and becomes a new Adam living in perfect harmony with the beasts (Is 11:6-9; Gn 3:19-20; see A. Feuillet, *EstBib* 19 [1960] 49-73). Though Lk Parallels Mt (4:1-11), there are distinct embellishments so that it is difficult to decide which one stands closer to the original form of Q. Mt develops the two themes of Moses and the kingdom: Jesus, like Moses, is found atop “a very high mountain” (Mt 4:8, cf. Dt 34:r-4); Mt adds “forty nights” to the fast of “forty days,” thus more closely associating Jesus’ fast with that of Moses (Dt 9:9, 18; Ex 34:28); the third and climactic scene in Mt concerns the kingdom, as Jesus rejects that of the devil (“all the kingdoms of the world,” 4:8) to mount another mountain in Galilee, there to proclaim the true kingdom. All these differences in Mt from the Lucan version stress the theological viewpoint of the First Gospel. But Luke has his own doctrinal viewpoint too, which will be developed below. (See A. Hastings, *Prophet and Witness* [Baltimore, 1958] 122-23.)**1. full of the Holy Spirit:** A Lucan phrase (Acts 6:5; 7:55; 11:24). The double mention of the Spirit in this verse explains why Luke is called the Evangelist of the Spirit. **returned:** The Gk word (*hypostrophō*) occurs 35 times in Lucan writings, and only 4 times in the rest of the NT. This is an indication of a strong Lucan redaction of the Temptation Account. **he was led by the Spirit up and down the wilderness:** Luke here employs Gk phrases that show a delicate nuance of meaning, different from Mt. The Spirit accompanied Jesus during 40 days in the desert, and only after this period of prayerful communion with the Father does Jesus engage in battle with the devil. The full force of the godhead confronts the world of diabolical power; it is the eschatological moment.**3. if you are the son of God:** The temptation centers on the kind of a Messiah Jesus will be: Will he win the people by granting what they immediately desire, or will he thrust them into suffering by the divine ideals demanded of them? **tell this stone to turn into bread:** Luke uses the singular; Mt refers to stones and many loaves of bread. Mt sees all Israel being tempted in Jesus; Lk portrays a more personal temptation for Jesus alone.**4. not by bread alone:** Jesus responds with Dt 8:3 (cf. Ex 16). Jesus’ thoughts are

EstBib *Estudios biblicos*

Gk Greek

NT New Testament

expressed in what might have been the favorite OT book of the early apostolic Church (see Lk 10:27; Acts 3:22).**5. took him up:** It is usually stated that Lk reverses the sequence of the temptation scenes, for Mt places the episode on the mountain last. Each Evangelist's arrangement fits so well into his own "theology" that it is difficult to decide whose order better corresponds to the original order in Q. *in a single moment:* These words, found only in Lk, remove the idea of any physical translation of Jesus; it happened in a vision. *all the kingdoms of the inhabitable [world]:* Lk clearly refers to political domains. Verse 6 is a Lucan addition, not found in Mt. We sense here the Johannine idea that the world is under the power of the devil (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Lk 22:53; Acts 26:18). A battle of cosmic proportions is being fought to the bitter end (Ap 13:1-8). In rejecting a Political messiahship, Jesus again quotes Dt (6:13; 10:20; cf. Ex 23:24).

54 **9. to Jerusalem:** Jerusalem constitutes the climax of Luke's Temptation Account, as it will of his entire theology. He presents Jesus' entire ministry as a journey leading to Jerusalem; but the true Jerusalem perfectly fulfilling every prophetic hope, will be Jesus himself (Lk 9:51; 21:37f.; 24:50-53; Acts 1:12; Ap 21:2).**10. his angels charge over you:** Again with Dt 6:16 (cf. Ps 91:11), Jesus rejects the proposal to be the Messiah of the gaudy and the marvelous, even though this is the kind of a Messiah many people want. Salvation is to be attained in the humble and at times sorrowful way of faith.**13.** Luke writes his own conclusion, different from Mt. *finishing every temptation:* The idea seems to be that Jesus has perfected himself through the experience of every temptation (cf. Heb 5:9). Jesus as man completes his role as Messiah and so conquers for every man. The full effects of Jesus' victory is now to be seen in his public ministry. *departed from him for a while:* Luke anticipates the passion (22:3, 53). He edits all temptations out of his narrative of the public ministry, even omitting the incident of Mt 16:23. Even though the devil returns at the end in the Passion Narrative, Jesus, nonetheless, dies a man of peace and strength; the victory seems already achieved. His entire ministry will show that the way of the cross is a way to victory.

Some scholars deny the historicity of the temptation scene. However, we must reckon with the fact that the other Gospels portray trials and temptations in the later life of Jesus, and we must recognize the strong tradition, favoring the reality of the desert scene. Mt and Lk (or Q) could have expanded an early but brief tradition (Mk) and added details drawn from later events because of a distinctly theological viewpoint. Lk's first temptation reminds us of Jn 6:26-34; the second, of Jn 6:15; the third, of Jn 7:1-4 (cf. R. E. Brown, *CBQ* 23 [1963] 152-55). Other similarities occur in Mt 12:38-42; 16:1-4; 27:42. Just as Matthew and Luke rearranged the sayings and activities of Jesus, disregarding chronological and geographical details, in order to form either the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7) or the Journey Narrative (Lk 9:51ff.), so a similar process could

OT Old Testament

Q Quelle

CBQ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*

be responsible for the way in which real temptations scattered through the life of Jesus are retold in a new setting in order to focus attention upon theological involvements. Why did the Church do this—for the temptation story already existed in Q when Luke wrote? Perhaps it was to counteract the claims of false Messiahs with their bizarre miracles; or it may have been to re-emphasize the humanity of Jesus against those who considered flesh to be evil.

(See Bultmann, *HST* 254-57, 426-27. Dupont, J., *ScEccl* 14 [1962] 7-29; *NTS* 3 [1956-57] 287-304. Feuillet, A., *Bib* 40 [1959] 613-31. Köppen, K. P., *Die Auslegung der Versuchungsgeschichte unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der alten Kirche* [Tübingen, 1961]. Riesenfeld, H., "Le caractère messianique de la tentation au désert," *La venue du Messie*[Tournai, 1962] 51-63.)

Haydock's Catholic Commentary

Notes & Commentary:

Ver. 2. In collating the present narrative with that of St. Matthew it appears that Jesus Christ was not tempted till the expiration of forty days. (Bible de Vence) --- Many reasons may be assigned why Christ permitted himself to be tempted. 1st. To merit for man the grace of overcoming temptations. 2d. To encourage us under temptations. 3d. To teach us not to be cast down with temptations, however grievous they may be, since even Jesus Christ submitted to them. 4thly. To point out to us the manner in which we ought to behave in time of temptation. (Dionysius)

Ver. 3. The tempter here appears to endeavour to discover by stratagem whether Christ was the Son of God. He does not say, *if thou be the Son of God*, "pray" that these stones be made bread, which he might have said to any man; but "command," effect by thine own authority, that this come to pass. If Christ had done this, the tempter would have instantly concluded, that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, since only God could effect such a miracle. (Dionysius)

Ver. 10. We have the devil here again citing Scripture, (Psalm xc. ver. 11.) (Read what is given on this subject in note on ver. 6, chap. iv. of St. Matthew's gospel) which shews how very dangerous a thing it is to put the Scripture, in the first instance, indiscriminately into every, even the most illiterate person's hands, without any previous disposition of the mind and heart, by study and prayer. How much more satisfactory

ScEccl Sciences ecclésiastiques

NTS New Testament Studies

Bib Biblica

must it be to be guided by the Church of God, which Christ has promised to secure against all error, and which he commands all to obey! How much more rational to begin with distributing elementary catechisms, approved by the Catholic Church as conformable to the word of God, and then only opening to them the sacred mystic book, when their minds and hearts are better prepared to avail themselves of the inestimable treasure, and of justly appreciating and exploring the golden lore. If humility be a virtue that renders us most pleasing to God, it is a virtue particularly necessary for the proper understanding of Holy Writ. This will teach us to submit (whenever the Scripture is either silent or obscure in points of faith) our own private and unassisted judgment to the judgment and comments of the Church. This was the sentiment of a great philosopher of this nation, who, when charged with scepticism and a love of novelty by his contemporaries, replied: "However fanciful I may be esteemed in matters of philosophy, in religious concerns I like to go the beaten road. Where the Scripture is silent, the Church is my text. Where that speaks, it is but the comment; and I never refer any thing to the arbitration of my own judgment, but in the silence of them both."

Ver. 13. *For a time*, viz. until his Passion, in which he again most grievously tempted him, by the hands of impious persecutors, whom he could not overcome with sensuality, covetousness, or vanity. The devil now deals with men in the same manner. He tempts them, and, being overcome, leaves them for a time, to prompt them to rest in a fatal security; that indulging indolence, they may at some future period be attacked, with greater certainty of success, when unprepared. Knowing, therefore, the trick and design of our infernal enemy, how much does it behove us to be on our guard; and having overcome in one temptation, prepare ourselves for another; never resting in the presumptuous thought, that we are sufficiently strong in virtue to resist the enemy, without fresh preparation. (Dionysius) --- This history of the various temptations to which our Saviour subjects himself, as related by St. Luke, is exactly the same as that given by St. Matthew with this only difference, that the order in which the temptations took place is not the same in both evangelists: but it does not matter what order is observed, where all the circumstances are related. (St. Augustine)

Daily Bible Study, Luke 4 1-13, Barclay (non-Catholic)

THE BATTLE WITH TEMPTATION

Luke 4:1–13

Jesus came back from the Jordan full of the Holy Spirit. He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, and for forty days he was tempted by the devil; and in those days he ate nothing, and when they were completed he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you really are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered him, "It stands written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" He took him up and showed him in an instant of time all the kingdoms of the inhabited world. The devil

said to him, "I will give you all this power and the glory of them, because it has been handed over to me, and I can give it to whomsoever I wish. If then you worship me all of it will be yours." Jesus answered him, "It stands written, 'You must worship the Lord God and him only must you serve.'" He brought him to Jerusalem and set him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and said to him, "If you really are the Son of God throw yourself down from here, for it stands written, 'He has given his angels instructions concerning you, to take care of you, and they will bear you up in their hands lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It has been said, 'You must not try to test the Lord your God.'" So when he had gone through the whole gamut of temptation, the devil left him for a time.

WE have already seen how there were certain great milestones in the life of Jesus and here is one of the greatest. In the Temple when he was twelve there had come the realization that God was his Father in a unique way. In the emergence of John, the hour had struck and in his baptism God's approval had come. At this time Jesus was just about to begin his campaign. Before a man begins a campaign he must choose his methods. The temptation story shows us Jesus choosing once and for all the method by which he proposed to win men to God. It shows him rejecting the way of power and glory and accepting the way of suffering and the cross.

Before we go on to think of this story in detail there are two general points we must note.

(i) This is the most sacred of stories, for it can have come from no other source than his own lips. At some time he must have himself told his disciples about this most intimate experience of his soul.

(ii) Even at this time Jesus must have been conscious of quite exceptional powers. The whole point of the temptations is that they could have come only to a man who could do astonishing things. It is no temptation to us to turn stones into bread or leap from a Temple pinnacle, for the simple reason that it is impossible for us to do such things. These are temptations which could have come only to a man whose powers were unique and who had to decide how to use them.

First of all let us think of the scene, namely, the wilderness. The inhabited part of Judaea stood on the central plateau which was the backbone of Southern Palestine. Between it and the Dead Sea stretched a terrible wilderness, thirty-five by fifteen miles. It was called Jeshimmon, which means "The Devastation." The hills were like dust heaps; the limestone looked blistered and peeling; the rocks were bare and jagged; the ground sounded hollow to the horses' hooves; it glowed with heat like a vast furnace and ran out to the precipices, 1,200 feet high, which swooped down to the Dead Sea. It was in that awesome devastation that Jesus was tempted.

We must not think that the three temptations came and went like scenes in a play. We must rather think of Jesus deliberately retiring to this lonely place and for forty days wrestling with the problem of how he could win men. It was a long battle which never

ceased until the cross and the story ends by saying that the tempter left Jesus—*for a season*.

(i) The first temptation was to turn stones into bread. This wilderness was not a wilderness of sand. It was covered by little bits of limestone exactly like loaves. The tempter said to Jesus, "If you want people to follow you, use your wonderful powers to give them material things." He was suggesting that Jesus should *bribe people* into following him. Back came Jesus' answer in a quotation of Deuteronomy 8:3. "A man," he said, "will never find life in material things."

The task of Christianity is not to produce new conditions, although the weight and voice of the church must be behind all efforts to make life better for men. Its real task is to produce *new men*; and given the new men, the new conditions will follow.

(ii) In the second temptation Jesus in imagination stood upon a mountain from which the whole civilized world could be seen. The tempter said, "Worship me, and all will be yours." *This is the temptation to compromise*. The devil said, "I have got people in my grip. Don't set your standards so high. Strike a bargain with me. Just compromise a little with evil and men will follow you." Back came Jesus' answer, "God is God, right is right and wrong is wrong. There can be no compromise in the war on evil." Once again Jesus quotes scripture (Deuteronomy 6:13; 10; 20).

It is a constant temptation to seek to win men by compromising with the standards of the world. G. K. Chesterton said that the tendency of the world is to see things in terms of an indeterminate grey; but the duty of the Christian is to see things in terms of black and white. As Carlyle said, "The Christian must be consumed by the conviction of the infinite beauty of holiness and the infinite damnability of sin."

(iii) In the third temptation Jesus in imagination saw himself on the pinnacle of the Temple where Solomon's Porch and the Royal Porch met. There was a sheer drop of 450 feet down into the Kedron Valley below. This was the temptation *to give the people sensations*. "No," said Jesus, "you must not make senseless experiments with the power of God" (Deuteronomy 6:16). Jesus saw quite clearly that if he produced sensations he could be a nine days' wonder; but he also saw that sensationalism would never last.

The hard way of service and of suffering leads to the cross, but after the cross to the crown