

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Muskego, Wisconsin
March 10, 2019

His Pain, Our Gain: JOB 1 – JESUS CAME TO DESTROY THE DEVIL'S WORK Luke 4:1-3

Why did God make his book so large that a life-time of reading will never exhaust its contents? Do we ever question the value of weekly worship of God and the pondering his book? Isn't the Bible a bit of "overkill"? I know Jesus—isn't that enough?

Jesus once said, *"Every teacher of the (Word) who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."* Jesus says his book is a treasure trove of wisdom and blessing. Hmm...

True story. A woman once wrote an article touching on the importance of the **details** in God's Word. *"My husband and I were Christians when we met in college. We wanted to honor God in our lives but when we got engaged, we rationalized that intimacy was OK. We were not yet married, but we were committed to being married... We made it to our wedding day without "getting caught", all seemed good. Seven years into our marriage we were on the verge of divorce. In an effort to save our marriage we went together for Christian counseling. Only then did the 'root cause' of our struggles surface. We did not trust each other to be faithful! The reason? We recognized that prior to marriage we had been willing to ignore God's will regarding intimacy and we didn't trust each other to listen to God after our marriage! Not until we together confessed our sin before God and received his forgiveness, could God could begin to build the trust we needed for our marriage to survive."*

The devil IS in the details, isn't he? Always working to destroy our relationships with God and each other? Which is why the Spirit of God wrote a book of details to remind us weekly how **JESUS CAME, JOB 1, TO DESTROY THE DEVIL'S WORK.**

1. He Waded Into the Details

a. The Darkness

Jesus waded right into the details, didn't he? The gospels record that as soon as Jesus was baptized to start his ministry he was filled with the Holy Spirit and led by the Spirit into the wilderness *TO BE TEMPTED* by the devil. He waded right into the darkness of our sinful condition without being sinful himself to take on the devil face to face! Why?

He would suffer hell for us—God’s punishment for sin—to give us eternal life! Wasn’t that enough? WHY would he one day be flogged with a whip of cords that would rip open his flesh? Why did he have to be hated by his own people, spit on—such an indignity! — crucified like the lowliest criminal? Wasn’t hell enough?

WHY do we find him in the desert at the will of his Father--fasting 40 days, isolated, hungry, tired, tempted? At the end, with nothing left in the tank for Jesus **physically**—the full weight of crucifixion three years away pressing upon him **spiritually**—the knowledge that his Father’s plan for us depended upon him **personally**—WHY is the devil practically invited to show up for what he hoped would be déjà vu? “Mankind falling again as I distract Jesus from his prize. I will focus him on himself, just as with Adam and Eve. He too will ignore the will of his Father and all will be lost!”

b. The Lies

If you wade into the darkness, you will invariably wade into the lies and half-truths of the devil. Do you remember Jesus’ warning? ***“When he lies, the devil speaks his native language--a liar and the father of lies.”*** When the unbelieving world speaks on things spiritual, when Christian churches speak things that God has not said, the devil himself is at work. Do you remember how the devil worked in the beginning and still works today? **Disguise** as something good. **Doubt** as to the will of God. **Disagreement** with God. **Deception** that God is not loving. Creating **desire** for things NOT of God. Neglecting to tell us of the **destruction** that always comes when we eat of the tree again! The devil hopes for the same results in this weakened God-Man, Jesus!

The devil tends to come at us where we are weak, to catch us off guard. So with Jesus. Jesus’ hunger was REAL; he was truly man. The devil hoped to entice Jesus into pride—easy with you and me—by questioning Jesus’ deity even as he poked at his hunger! ***“If you are the Son of God, assert your will. Make some bread. Come on, man! Where is your Father’s love?!”***

Jesus’ dread of the cross was REAL for both his natures, human and divine. He had come to be tortured and then separated from his Father—to experience hell for us—we can’t even imagine—that he might rule all things as the source of eternal life for those who believe! The devil, as the pseudo-ruler of the kingdoms of the earth, shows Jesus in an instant all the kingdoms and says, ***“Trust me. Avoid the suffering. Assert yourself, worship me...and all this will be yours.”***

The third temptation the devil plays dirty pool...using Jesus’ own words! Again he strikes at Jesus’ deity questioning WHY he will not assert his will! ***“If you ARE the Son of God, throw yourself down from this temple (it is YOUR temple isn’t it?). And these are***

your words: 'He will command his angels to guard you carefully.' Prove your mettle, Son of God! Play the role!'

APPLICATION WHY did Jesus submit himself to this trial and temptation? Wouldn't the cross and hell be enough? Why would he one day permit himself to be accosted and assaulted and abused and hated and demeaned and discriminated against as though *worthless* in his own creation? The answer seems twofold. The writer to the Hebrews:

"We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin." Jesus had to keep the law of God perfectly for us to be our Savior, so the devil pummeled him with temptation at every turn! You and I know that pummeling; what a comfort to know that Jesus knows it too! Jesus proved his mettle as the Son of God by listening to the will of his Father and never doubting the obedience it would take to save us! A *perfect* sacrifice for sin.

The writer to the Hebrews adds, ***"He had to be made like us, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God."*** Jesus suffered the worst that the devil and the sinful world can bring at us so that he can personally and credibly speak into our sufferings and struggles and in mercy advocate for us before his Father and strengthen us in our every need!

And finally, our Savior allowed all of this to happen so that he could teach us how to fight!

2. He Taught Us How to Fight

a. Pick Up the Sword

Now before we get all excited... "It's about time. We'll help you, Jesus! Come on, devil! Come on world! Put 'em up! We'll show you a thing or two, right Jesus? Just like when you walked the earth?" Jesus smiles, "Yes, just like when I walked the earth."

Remember, this is the same Jesus whose self-defense class states: ***"You have heard, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well."***

This is definitely not a "put 'em up" kind of Jesus! If we respond in kind to the world's evil, WHO is left to be different than the world and to break its cycle of evil?! And how will anyone in the world know any other way than revenge and getting even?

But Jesus does NOT say, "Don't fight back." He tells us, ***"Take up the shield of faith...the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."*** So Jesus took up the Sword and defeated his enemy on the field of battle, sending

the message that in the end he would win VICTORY as a gift to those who believe—and the devil would be cast to judgment and doom!

But Jesus did not come out firing with “big gun” passages nor did he riddle the devil with 5000 of them! ***“It is written: Man does not live on bread alone...Worship the LORD your God and serve him only...Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”***

Jesus, can't you do better than that?! This devil is dissing you! Maybe a light saber to go along with the words? Sorry. How about the words you used on Peter, ***“Get behind me, Satan!”*** Or the grand words you gave David before Goliath, ***“You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied!”***

But think about it. Jesus did not need to call on the Name of God because he IS God! And the devil is like a dog on a leash only goes as far as God allows—a word from Jesus is all it took. And with Peter, Jesus is passionate for the safety of his apostle and the integrity of his mission—so we hear a bit of his heart!

What a comfort to know that we don't need 500 bible passages to face the devil. We don't need psyched-up vibrato! What we need is the simple name of Jesus—THE Living Sword of the Spirit. “Jesus, help me!” And maybe even his own words, “Get behind me, Satan...in the Name of my Savior and my God!”

b. Trust the Plan

But ***almost*** more important in the fight than the words of God is trust in God and his plan. Think about it. Wouldn't Jesus have had every right to set the record straight? ***“Satan, you KNOW that I am God and your Creator! You know that I can turn these stones into bread. But so that you never forget.” “Satan, adversary, that you may know that God's Word is always trustworthy and that my Father cares for me, I will show my power and cast myself down.”***

Better yet, Jesus could have with a thought made the devil quiver at his feet as his Master...but that was NOT his Father's plan, crushing Satan without the saving of you and me. The Father planned for Jesus' perfect life to repair the brokenness of Eden and his perfect death to absorb the just penalty of hell. Satan would be crushed...in the Father's time. Jesus did NOT have the right; he was bound to the plan.

APPLICATION Have you ever been tempted to deviate from God's plan in the facing of evil? Is the sword of the Spirit *really* meant for the details of MY life? **A true story** about a godly man who loves his wife--one that would haunt me if the Sword of the Spirit were not in my hands!

Keith loves his wife and I can only imagine the devil accusing God of injustice right now to Keith's face! You see, Keith and his wife had tried to share their love by having children. God said, "No", at first. Fertility treatments, a leap of faith, three embryos...three daughters! Great joy! Triple baptism! Triple birthdays! But then it *seemed* that God turned off the faucet of his blessings. A "spot" of cancer that would NOT be beaten. An online journal of her battle so that family and friends could pray and hope and trust. Tough symptoms, tougher treatments, yet stories of blessing God was still giving. Christmas cookies in the oven with fun and laughter yet another year! A family Easter one more time in the hope of Jesus' victory over sin and death. Dress shopping for a prom that mom will not see but her girls will SO remember!

I imagine Keith sitting in the hospice room today—in a bit of his own "wilderness". Tired and hungry for spiritual food and comfort. Isolated from his support network in the darkness of the night. His beloved wife so near...yet drifting...soon beyond his reach. What nastiness is the devil bringing Keith's way? How is the serpent striking where he is weak?

From the journal entries it seems that in this lonely place the Spirit of God is lovingly and faithfully tucking the Sword of the LORD of salvation into Keith's hands. Moments of question...replaced by perseverance of faith. Moments of anger...replaced by confident trust. Personal thoughts replaced by words of their God: ***"I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"***

You see, Jesus came to destroy the devil's work, all of it. So he waded into the details of the darkness of our lives. Always listening to his Father because we don't—the Father crediting his obedience to us. Keeping his eye on the prize he did die for our sin that we would never live in fear of God. His death to life that we might know a new day that evil can never take away!

CONCLUSION The devil is in the details, so Jesus lived and died in them to destroy the devil's work. And now by his grace he OWNS the details for you and me! So, ***"Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness."*** Amen.

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