

March 5, 2017 First Sunday of Lent
Not on bread alone is man to live!

Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7

Psalms 51:3-6, 12-17

Romans 5:12-19

Matthew 4:1-11

In the first reading God creates man by forming him out of the clay of the ground and giving him the breath of life. The serpent tempts the woman to eat of the forbidden fruit indicating she will become godlike. Both the man and woman partake and as their eyes are opened they become aware of their nakedness.

The Psalmist seeks mercy and cleansing. He acknowledges having done evil and realizes he has sinned against God so he pleads for a steadfast spirit to help him lead the kind of life that will keep him in God's presence. He pleads that he may experience the joy of salvation.

In the second reading Paul explains that sin and death came through one man and proliferated to all men. From Abraham to Moses there was no law written out for the people and yet disobedience led to condemnation and death. However, grace and life have come through Jesus and his gifts bring justice and acquittal to the obedient and faithful.

In the Gospel Jesus is led by the Spirit into the desert where he fasts for forty days and nights and is tempted by the devil. The devil asks Jesus to turn stones into bread, hurl himself off a high place and do homage for earthly rewards. Jesus responds that man does not live by bread alone, the Lord God shall not be put to the test, and homage is due to the Lord God alone.

The Father allowed the Son to be tempted
After being led into the desert by the Holy Spirit.

Temptation reveals itself as an internal struggle to every human being. We are reminded that Adam and Eve succumbed to temptation; that the Psalmist recognized his faults and sought cleansing and forgiveness.

Since Jesus possessed our human nature he too experienced this challenge. The devil tempts Jesus in three ways: the first seeks Jesus to use his power to take care of his physical needs; the second pertains to attaining worldly acclaim by exercising his authority; the third concerns gaining political power by abusing his authority. Jesus does not succumb to any of these and refutes each by words of Scripture and elevates Moses' responses in the Old Testament to a new level (see below).

Moses fasted:

Meanwhile I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights without eating or drinking (Deut 9:9b)

Moses instructed:

He therefore let you be afflicted with hunger, and then fed you with manna, a food unknown to you and your fathers, in order to show you that not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the LORD. (Deut 8:3)

"You shall not put the LORD, your God, to the test, as you did at Massah. (Deut 6:16)

The LORD, your God, shall you fear; him shall you serve, and by his name shall you swear. (Deut 6:13)

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