



“Come Meet Jesus...Who Confronts Evil”

First Sunday in Lent
Saturday and Sunday, March 9-10, 2019
All Services
The Reverend Dr. Jack M. Horner, Jr.
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16;
Romans 10:8b-13; Luke 4:1-13

Grace and peace be to you from our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Who is Jesus? Is he a great moral teach, a prophet of old reincarnated, a religious reformer, or maybe because he only served for three years a failed rabbi? Or perhaps as C.S. Lewis wrote in his book, maybe Jesus is just evil, after all anyone who would claim to be the Son of God and not be must either be evil or some sort of a crazy person, or perhaps he is the Messiah the Son of the living God. Come meet Jesus.

Throughout your life you're going to have many important relationships. Of course, your parents, grandparents, family, teachers, pastors, business associates, close friends, but none will be as important as your relationship with Jesus. To know him as a friend and savior, to trust and to be willing to follow him. To know why he died and rose again for you and for the whole world. To be loved by him and to share that love with others.

In this season of Lent the pastors of Trinity invite you to come meet Jesus. Jesus who challenges power, Jesus who calls us to change, Jesus who welcomes us home and who receives our gifts. And this week: Come and meet Jesus who confronts evil.

M. Scott Peck in his book, "The People of the Lie", describes evil like this. "Evil is that which kills spirit. Evil is the force, residing either inside or outside of human beings, that seeks to kill life or liveliness. And goodness is its opposite. Goodness is that which promotes life and liveliness."

Evil and the devil is the: anti-God" force in the world. Peck uses this interesting illustration where he notes that when you spell out **L I V E** and invert the letters, it spells **EVIL**. Evil takes away, it tries to kill the life spirit in you.

The name devil in the Greek is *diabolus*, it literally means the accuser. The devil accuses. It declares that what God does is evil, and that evil is good.

In our gospel reading after the baptism by John, Jesus goes into the wilderness led by the Spirit, where he is challenged by the Evil One and is tested or tempted. The devil's temptations focused on three areas:

The first one the devil challenges Jesus to miraculously meet his own physical needs and desires by turning stones into bread. The devil was asking Jesus to doubt himself.

Jesus responds however with trust in God as being his most basic need.

Then he shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, in all their splendor. The devil tests Jesus to accumulate possessions in power through him, to doubt God's goodness and God's care and generosity to meet his needs.

Jesus responds with gratitude and worship for his Father.

The third temptation he's taken to a high place, the very top of the temple and he is told, jump. The devil wants Jesus to prove his divinity and God's protection over him. He wants Jesus to doubt God's divine purpose for him.

Jesus however responds with faith and an unwavering obedience to his Father.

His kingdom, the kingdom that he declared would not be given by someone else, it would be earned through his suffering and death.

Jesus confronts evil he holds true to his purpose and he does not betray his Father.

All of us know what it is like to enter the wilderness of temptation. Temptation is part and parcel of our human existence every single day of the year. In fact, I believe that it seems that the closer to God that we wish to be, the more that we seek to live our lives by faith, the more that temptation plagues us. And Jesus knows this. That's why he taught his disciples to lead us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." "Save us from the time of trial."

Frederick P. Wood writes: "*Temptation is not sin; it is the call to battle.*"

Shortly after the Reformation began some young followers of Martin Luther wrote him with a question, saying, "We are harassed by many temptations which appeal to us so often and so strongly that they give us no rest. You don't seem to be troubled in this way and we should like to know your secret. Temptations don't bother you? they said to Luther. Are you somehow immune to sin?"

Luther wrote them back in reply, saying, "I, too, know something of temptation. But the difference is that when temptation comes knocking at the door of my heart, I always answer, 'Go away! This place is occupied. Go back where you came from, for Christ is here.'"

Jesus knows all about temptation. He's led into the wilderness of sin to experience what we experience every single day, and he responds with trust in God in all things. Making choices that glorify and honor God. He responds in faith to difficult situations where we can be tempted and go off the path of discipleship.

What evils are you confronted with? What temptations trouble your heart? What tests your spirit?

Do you "beat yourself up;" by focusing on your past mistakes, your sins, your shortcomings, your faults and failures? Are you tempted to get offended, to hold

grudges, to walk in unforgiveness and to be consumed by anger? Are you holding onto regret or disappointment? Are you tempted to compromise your character and integrity by going down a pathway that you know is wrong and that you should turn from? Are you so carried away by the concerns of the world that you don't see the greatness and the generosity of God?

I invite you to tell evil and temptation, **“Go away, Christ is here!”**

You have the power of God to overcome your greatest sins, temptations, disappointments, problems, sicknesses, addiction and pride.

The living Christ has been there and done that and now lives in you! He is your refuge and your stronghold in whom you can put your trust! Christ will redeem our weakness and give us the strength to confront and overcome the Evil One. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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