

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

As we follow Jesus we realize that each one of us has a mission in life, just as Jesus lived his life in obedience to the Father giving his life that we might have life, we are to live our lives in service to one another.

Each one of our lives is somewhat different from everyone else's life, we come with different backgrounds, different ethnicity, different parts of the country, different families, different personalities, different spiritual gifts. But we are each one of us called by Jesus to mission.

Our mission is to make disciples of all people, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that Jesus commands. And the great thing is that God has gifted us all differently, different gifts, different life experiences, different backgrounds, and with that diversity of gifts and experience, we might reach out to the entire world with the good news of the gospel.

Now on this first Sunday in Lent, we find ourselves at the beginning of Matthew 4, Jesus has just been baptized by the John the Baptizer and is now being led into the wilderness.

"Then Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." He faced temptation, which reminds me of the first created, Adam and Eve in the garden, who gave into temptation. Then the forerunners of humanity were sent out from the Garden of Eden.

Adam and Eve were faithless, and as Paul says in his letter to the Romans, "many died through the one man's trespass," but God's Son is faithful to the saving mission God has sent Him to accomplish through his obedience, his innocent death, and joyous resurrection.

Jesus sent to do what the "one man" failed to do. The Father sent Jesus who was faithful and after fasting forty days Jesus faced the temptations of the adversary. The devil tries to divert Jesus from his mission to give his life on the cross for the sake of humanity.

Remember now that we each have a mission, we follow Jesus in our serving others, in making disciples of all nations. And as the devil tempted Jesus when he was hungry, so too we are often tempted at our weakest moments, perhaps with sweets, alcohol, drugs, sex, even our favorite pastimes e.g., fishing, boating, sports, whatever, are used to divert us from God, maybe ruining our health along the way.

Sometimes we put God to the test because he doesn't seem to answer our prayers, perhaps to cure a spouse or ourselves, we don't get a job or a promotion we want,

one of our kids seems to be doing poorly in school. We get upset because God isn't granting our wishes, our requests or even our demands.

But God is God whether you're upset with him or not, whether you believe in him or not. So do you have doubts or are you upset with God because you've set conditions or expectations and you're expecting God to prove he loves you or that he listens to you? Have you been diverted by thinking of God as genie?

Jesus wasn't diverted as were Adam and Eve in the Garden, he simply paid no heed to the devil's attempt to misuse scripture.

Then the devil tried to divert Jesus by appealing to his vanity, his need for power, telling Jesus he could have all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. We often define ourselves by whatever job we happen to hold, by how splendid our place in the woods or on the lake is, the kind of car we drive, our trophy spouse. Our self-worth gets caught up with things and positions, money and power. All these things are used by the devil to divert us.

Jesus was sent by God with a specific mission to save us through his life, his death, his resurrection, and he used God's Word to fight temptation, evil divisions and the devil with his empty promises. Jesus didn't yield, he who was alone on the cross remained faithful to the Father.

This morning our Lord reminds us he has been tempted and he resisted, the sinless died for our sins. He is strong where we are weak, but as he was often in prayer, so too we should often be in prayer. As Jesus quoted scripture so too we should be immersed in the study of God's word. Jesus was often in the synagogue as it was his custom, so too we should be in worship.

During this time of Lent let me suggest that you immerse yourself in a daily reading of the gospel of Matthew. Read, re-read it, ask yourself what it says to you and your own situation. Pray about it. Think of how it relates to you as a disciple.

We have been called to follow Jesus, leaning from him and inviting others to follow as well. Jesus followed the Father's will and did what was set before him to do. As a result of his faithfulness, you and I have received the gift of faith, and we are commanded to share that gift with the world through the lives we live.

AMEN