

Rev. Dan Welch Lent 1 2-18-24 Text- Mark 1:9-15

“When you experience temptation, say, ‘Get behind me, Satan! I’m baptized!’” That saying is often attributed to Martin Luther. Whether he said those exact words or not, they do reflect his teaching about Baptism and resisting the devil. But more importantly, that saying aligns with God’s Word. Peter wrote, “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **Resist** him, firm in your faith” (1 Pet 5:8–9). Every day, we face the evil one in a very real battle. So, saying, “Get behind me, Satan! I’m baptized!” fits in very well with Peter’s call to resist him and stand firm in our faith.

In fact, Peter of all people, would have been quite familiar with the command, “Get behind me, Satan!” That’s because he heard it from Jesus Himself during Jesus’ earthly ministry. It went like this: Peter had just given the good confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. But when Jesus said this means He will be rejected by the religious leaders, be killed, and rise after three days, Peter said, “This shall never happen to you” (Mt 16:22). Then came Jesus’ stinging rebuke to Peter, saying, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man” (Mk 8:33). Yes, Peter knew these words, but they came from Jesus’ own lips to the devil tempting Him.

The devil also tempts us to set our mind on the things of man and not God. He tempts us to sin, to despair, to doubt God’s mercy; to give up all hope that God truly loves us and that He’s has promised to work all things for the good of those who love Him.

It’s a battle we face all the time from a hidden enemy. It’s why the Lord’s Prayer teaches us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.”

“Get Behind Me, Satan! I’m Baptized!” is not a mere mantra. It is a confession of faith in the very work of Jesus, who defeated the devil. Let’s take a look at just why we can be so confident in speaking this bold statement of faith.

I. Mark, in his account of Jesus’ temptation, closely connects Jesus’ **Baptism** with His temptation. He writes that **after** His Baptism, the Spirit immediately drove Jesus into the wilderness, where Satan tempted him for forty days. The word “immediately” connects these two events: Jesus’ Baptism & Temptation.

Here’s what happened:

Jesus’ earthly ministry began as He was baptized by John in the Jordan River. It was a Baptism for sinners. That is important, as we’ll see. When Jesus came out of the water, an amazing cosmic event took place. Mark writes that Jesus saw the heavens “torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove” (v 10). As Jesus sees this, He hears God the Father say, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (v 11).

God, the Father says this because Jesus has set in motion His work as the Messiah to save sinners. He is baptized with the sinners' Baptism. He has come to be joined to our sinful condition. This pleased the Father. The Holy Spirit is also intimately involved as He now descends upon Jesus, anointing Him for His mission as God's Anointed One.

This is why Jesus' Baptism was a huge inaugural event. The Baptism of Jesus is a very significant part of God's plan of salvation. Jesus insisted on being baptized with sinners, the Father commends and the Holy Spirit anoints Him for it. The fulfillment of the messianic covenant, made long ago by Jeremiah and other prophets, is now being fulfilled!

"Immediately" after His Baptism, Mark writes, the Spirit drove or more literally in the original Greek, "hurls" or "throws" Jesus into the wilderness. The words read like pushing a boxer into the ring to take on his adversary! Matthew and Luke also make this connection between Jesus' Baptism and temptation. But Mark, by leaving out the details of these temptations, *really* emphasizes the connection. Today's Gospel text helps us see this by putting both events in the same reading.

If Jesus' Baptism was the announcement that the Messiah had come to fulfill the covenant God made to save sinners, then Jesus being thrown into the desert was a declaration of war against Satan and the forces of evil. Yes, God had come to take on the devil and to defeat him!

Once a declaration of war is issued, it is going to happen. You're committed! In the United States, it takes a two-thirds vote of Congress to declare war against an enemy. In the battle against sin and evil, there's *unanimous* consent of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—at the Baptism of Jesus. The evil enemy will be attacked. The Holy Spirit immediately drives Jesus into the wilderness to take on the devil.

II. But it's a very strange battle plan. Mark's account simply says that out in the wild Satan was tempting Jesus for forty days. Imagine what a spiritually immature Peter might have said. Maybe something like, "Come on, God. Knock this guy out! Don't put up with this. He's no match for you!"

Yet Jesus suffers Satan's temptations for forty days. Why? Because it's God's plan to save sinners. Jesus must suffer temptation with us and for us. He does this for forty days. He's the promised Messiah who took the place of Israel, which fell into sin and unbelief. The Old Testament records that the people of Israel gave in to temptation, refused to believe that the Lord really could, really would bring them into the Promised Land. They had to wander forty years in the wilderness as a result. But Jesus never yielded. He never fell to temptation. He trusted that God would provide for Him. The writer to the Hebrews says he was "tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin" (Heb 4:15 NIV).

After the forty days, though, the devil didn't stop. Luke writes that the devil "departed from him until an opportune time" (Lk 4:13). He would hide his attacks. He would come at Jesus as he did through Peter during His earthly ministry. As he did at the cross, when hecklers taunted, "Save yourself, and come down from the cross!" (Mk 15:30). All these were still Satan's attacks, his temptations to abandon the mission to save sinful humankind.

That final attack on Jesus was at the cross, where the war had its crucial battle. There, Jesus' Baptism would reach its fulfillment (cf Mk 10:39). When Jesus says, "It is finished" and breathes His last (Jn 19:30), the battle is over. Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. His resurrection announced to the world God's victory over sin, death, and, yes, the devil!

III. "Get behind me, Satan! I'm baptized!" is not a mere mantra. It's a confession of faith that Jesus defeated the devil. A Christian can confidently say this because Baptism gives the promise of that victory to you. The Baptism of Jesus resulted in the defeat of Satan. Your Baptism into Jesus' death and resurrection promises that same for you (cf Rom 6:3-4).

This is why telling Satan to get lost, that you are baptized, is a good strategy. You need such a strategy because the devil, though defeated, is still on the prowl. When an enemy is defeated in war, the leaders of the defeated country are to meet with the victor to acknowledge defeat and ask for terms of peace. However, the devil remains the "father of lies" (Jn 8:44) and acts as if he *isn't* defeated—even though God has declared it so. For now, God allows this. So, Satan still goes about prowling and seeking whom he may devour with his temptations, accusations, and lies.

But when he tempts you to doubt that Jesus completely paid for all of your sin, say, "Get behind me, Satan! I'm baptized!"

When the devil tempts you to despair, thinking life is hopeless, when he tempts you to indulge your sinful nature, say, "Get behind me, Satan! I'm baptized!"

And, when you fall and he accuses you of guilt before God, say, "Get behind me, Satan! I'm baptized!"

So, when you face any of these attacks, you can confidently say, "Get behind me, Satan! I'm baptized!"

Yes, a time *is* coming when you'll no longer *need* such a strategy. Jesus has promised to rend the heavens again and come down a *second* time. When that happens, the devil will no longer be on the prowl. He will be cast from the earth and "thrown into the lake of fire" (Rev 20:14).

Until that time, you and I can do no better, in the face of Satan's temptations, than to look to the promise of Jesus' victory in our Baptism and say, "Get behind me, Satan! *I am baptized!*" Amen.