Text: Luke 4:1-13

**Introduction**

Luther’s small catechism is full of quotable and usable wisdom when in a time of testing or temptation. Luther really had a marvelous touch for making simple the things that we want to make complex. In complexity we can worm our way out of things. In complexity we can throw up our hands and say “who knew.” But for me the biggest piece of wisdom is probably his repeated question. What does this mean? Luther quotes the scripture and then asks what does this mean? Which among the various catechisms both before Lutherans and after is unique. Most catechisms ask a question and supply an answer. And the questions and answers build on each other. Or they go down a rathole of thinking – this is where the famous question of flippancy comes from – “How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?” If you follow the Q&A all the way down, that question makes sense. But you are a long way down. And if you happen to ask “what does this mean” with the implied for me, it’s pretty tough to come up with an answer.

Luther in his layout more or less asserts there are only six things the Christian needs to know. The 10 commandments, the creed and the Lord’s Prayer. Which are the summary of the Word. And then we need to understand the sacraments: Baptism, the Supper and the Office of the Keys. But while believing that the Word of God – with the help of the indwelling Spirit – can be understood by all, it is also that Word that is daily assaulted by the Devil. He has never quit asking, “did God really say that?” The world is always putting forward things for us to believe are of higher worth. And our own flesh is constantly like Eve trying to justify readings of the Scripture that we like. “She saw that that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise (Gen. 3:6 ESV).” And all those might have been true, but added up to a falsehood. To not understanding what did the action mean.

**Text**

The temptation of Jesus is always the second beat of the ministry of Jesus. The first beat, the formal start of that ministry being his baptism. And then as Luke today tells us “full of the Holy Spirit” Jesus is lead by that Spirit into the wilderness for forty days. And throughout those 40 days Jesus is tempted by the devil. There are lots of 40’s in the Scriptures. It’s always a number of whatever is happening being made full. The flood rains came for 40 days and 40 nights. A full measure of the judgement. Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years, a full measure of their failure of faith. And it is that second one that Jesus’ time in the wilderness recreates. Jesus is Israel reduced to one. And everywhere that Israel failed, Jesus succeeds. Israel succumbs again and again to the temptations in the wilderness. Immediately desiring the pantry of Egypt. Grumbling about what God has provided. And even building the golden calf. Isreal succumbs to temptation of the flesh, or the world and of Satan. Jesus is taken out by the Spirit for the same tests. He is tempted by the flesh, by the world and Satan himself – our three great enemies. And each time Jesus replies with the correct meaning of the Word.

We think of Satan as a liar, and he is. But he isn’t some 4 year old liar. He isn’t even just of the quality of a very good poker player. Satan is liar in that he can quote scripture and tell the truth, and yet the meaning is a lie. He is a liar of the quality that we want to believe the lie.

If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread. It’s been 40 days since Jesus ate. “He was hungry.” He is the Son of God. The voice from Heaven said so. The beloved son. This is also the God who provided the manna for the original Israel. What harm could come from such a frivolous miracle? The problem is that the Son of God came to serve, not to be served. The miracles are signs and wonders that point to what God shall do for man. Jesus’ reply - “Man shall not live by bread alone.” – is about the seriousness of the Word of God. The Word is not for mere fleshly hunger. The Word will make bread into flesh. The Word overcomes the flesh.

Luke’s second temptation is that of the world. All the Kingdoms of this world and their glory are indeed Satan’s. The lie, if you want to call it such, is that this world is temporal. And when this world is rolled up and thrown away, ownership of such faded glory is pure suffering in the fire. It is only God who creates. And it is only God who bestows authority and establishes limits of glory. Satan and earthly rulers may desire worship, but “you worship the LORD your God.”

The last temptation that Satan throws out is fall of Satan himself. To separate yourself from the will of God. Jesus knew what his vocation was. Jesus knew what the Father desired of him. The scriptural promises that Satan throws out are the promises that even in the midst of temporal troubles, God is with us. The eternal victory is secure. But in this world we walk by faith. Even Jesus, according to his human nature, walks by faith. He is not discerning his path, but walking it. Doing what the devil tempted is replacing faith with some magic knowing. It is placing yourself against the will of God for how we are to live now.

**Christology**

Christ overcame all the temptations common to us. Christ turned down the desires of the flesh, the glory of the world, and Satan himself. His life from this early point of his ministry all the way to the cross was a continual defeat of our enemies.

And it is this victory that he gives to us. He gives us his victory in two ways.

The first is the pure gift of grace. Christ has bound the strong man. Satan did own us. Satan did have authority over us. And Satan was sure that any human that came into the world would succumb to the same lies. But Christ did not. And so Christ became the 2nd Adam – a new humanity. And all of us have been incorporated into Christ by being born again. By being born of water and the Spirit.

**Moral**

The second victory is that for the first time – because of that birth of the Spirit – we have real choices.

We do not have to give in to every temptation of the flesh. We are able to mortify the evil desires of the flesh and turn our desires to the Spirit.

We do not have to chase the fading glory of the world. We can pass through things temporal without losing the things eternal. We can worship God in truth.

And we do not have to do the will of Satan. Our will is no longer bound in that way, but for the first time we are free to do the will of our Father who is in Heaven. We can desire the miracle, not for frivolous ways, but as signs and wonders. We can trust that not only will God provide everything that we need for this body and life, but that he has already provided us an eternal mansion. Whatever danger we walk through here, our walk is heavenward.

**Eschatological**

When in the middle of temptation, we can be aware of the lie. In the light of Scripture we can ask “what does this mean?” What is the tempter trying to get us to do? And which way would I be walking if I do it? Am I walking toward the temporal? Am I walking toward demanding full knowledge now? Or am I walking in faith? Am I walking toward the eternal promised to us?

“When the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from his until an opportune time.” In this life Satan is always looking for another opportune time. And we are often weak enough to give him those times.

But Christ has won. And Satan’s time is short. And the day comes when he will be sent away forever.