

Mark 1:12-15

March 5, 2006 – 1<sup>st</sup> SUNDAY IN LENT

## Jesus Gives Us True Repentance

- **Tempted by Satan** (vv. 12,13)
- **Proclaiming the Good News** (vv. 14,15)

In the name of Jesus, our suffering Savior and Friend, dearly redeemed believers:

**Repentance.** You won't likely read that in the newspaper. Emails from friends will leave it out. The closest you may get in the media is "remorse." But people still don't believe it. That congressman in California so ashamed of taking bribes comes off to the public as just another corrupt politician who happened to get caught. Only God knows if he's truly sorry. But then, who needs to be sorry if "everybody's doing it," and no one gets hurt? Who needs **Repentance**?

Sometimes we need to do an experiment which Dr. Martin Luther suggested. If you don't feel the need for **Repentance**, put your hand inside your shirt to feel if you still have flesh. If you do, then remember what our Lord says that flesh will produce: "**For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.**" (Matthew 15:19 NIV) Then look around you. Are you still in the world? Then the world will be trying to lead you into sin. And we heard in today's Second Lesson, there's another enemy that wants to destroy your soul in hell. **As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."** (Romans 8:36 NIV) On this long trip from earth to heaven, we need God's Travel Clinic and a shot of **True Repentance**. Thank God He sent the clinic to us in the Person of His own Son. **Jesus Gives Us True Repentance.**

- **Tempted by Satan** (vv. 12,13)

Jesus had just been baptized "**to fulfill all righteousness.**" If we don't need to repent, what was that all about? Jesus had no sins of His own, yet in a sense He was the most sinful human being who ever lived. God blamed Jesus for every time you swear, every time I get angry, every time we misjudge someone's motives, or question their integrity, or doubt the promises of God. Every sin is a violation of God's holy will in a world of infinite sin like the tossing sea. If you think you don't need baptism, why was Jesus baptized "**to fulfill all righteousness**"? Why the Father's voice from heaven? "**This is my Son whom I love; with him I am well pleased.**" (Matthew 3:15-17)

Immediately after baptism, Mark says, "**The Spirit sent [Jesus] out into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and the angels attended him.**" In those days they still had wild beasts like lions that far north in Palestine. But the lion most threatening to Jesus was the one from hell that tried for forty days straight to break Jesus' will and destroy His desire to please His heavenly Father. If Jesus had flickered just once in His resolve, we would have no Savior from sin. Our infinite sins took the infinite holiness and mercy of God to remove. And we prove it every time we give in to sin or fail to feel like doing what we know we should. And you don't have to guess when the temptations will come thick and fast for you. As soon as God brings you into a right relationship with Him, loving your heavenly Father, the lion from hell will attack. When you're feeling weak and vulnerable, Satan will be stalking your soul with frightening, eternal consequences. That's why the Lord warns, "**Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith....**" (1 Peter 5:8f) And just as the angels attended Jesus, so God sends them to guard us. We're never alone in the deserts of our lives. The Holy Spirit says, "**Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**" (James 4:7)

Jesus shows we need **Repentance** from all the tsunamis, earth quakes, hurricanes and terrorist attacks out there. Jesus pointed to a couple well known news stories in His day and asked, "**Do you think**

*[the victims} were more guilty than all the others...?]* That's the temptation, isn't it? To think that somehow they must have deserved it, but we, of course, do not. Better than the others? Jesus answers: **"I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will perish."** (Luke 13:4f) Instead of demanding why God lets suffering continue, we should be asking, "How can I repent so that I don't have to perish too?" When I was a boy, I thought you had to cry hard enough to be forgiven. That's what Lutheran Pietists taught. But it's also in the Roman Catholic teaching of penance where forgiveness is only rewarded to those who are truly sorry. How can you ever know? A world of sorrow could not remove a single sin. Thank God for sending Jesus Christ to give us this priceless blessing? **Jesus Gives Us True Repentance....**

- **Proclaiming the Good News (vv. 14,15)**

*"After John was put in prison...."* Now there's someone who did not deserve it! All John did was tell King Herod he was sinning by taking his brother's wife. It's like that Roman Catholic priest in Canada who dared to say publicly that homosexuality is sin. Is he in prison or did he just have to pay a heavy fine. If you ever wonder why people seem so little interested in hearing about Jesus, the answer is right here. They don't feel the need because they refuse to recognize their sin. It's easier to jail an innocent man and cut off his head than to say, "God, I'm sorry. I'm wrong. I sinned."

And don't think for a minute that I'm only talking about unbelievers. In a few moments we'll be singing the words of an ancient king who took the wife of one of his most valiant and loyal soldiers, then sent a letter in his hand to have him killed along with the rest of his platoon. And when the prophet Nathan told him a story about a rich man stealing his neighbor's only lamb, cruel King David said the man should die. What a shock for Nathan to look his king in the eye and tell him: **"You are the man."** What a blessing that David could admit, **"I have sinned."** He deserved to die. He had trouble with his heart because he loved that woman. That's why we with David pray, **"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with your free Spirit."** (Psalm 51; CW p. 20) We need God to work **True Repentance** in our hearts. Otherwise, we'll never get it right.

**Jesus Gives Us True Repentance by Proclaiming the Good News.** *After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"* Do you see? **True Repentance** is not the same as remorse. Judas was very remorseful when he realized he had betrayed the innocent blood of Jesus. But in despair Judas hanged himself. He needed more than remorse. Peter also was sorry for denying Jesus. He went out and wept bitterly. But along with sorrow Peter had faith that Jesus is our Savior from sin. Peter did not despair. He trusted God's kindness that leads us to repentance. **The Good News** of forgiveness makes us truly sorry for our sins and makes us trust that God already forgave them. Proclaim this **Good News**. Forgiveness does not depend on our feelings; it depends entirely on God.

Think what a victorious blessing faith really is. Remember that man down on his stomach, crawling across a frozen river? Every time the ice cracked a little, he was terrified he'd plunge into the frigid depths below. But soon he heard the sound of whistling. Carefully he turned to see a team of horses pulling a heavy sleigh and the driver whistling a merry tune. Same ice. All he needed was faith.

And who arrives safely? The passenger who sits white knuckled and barely breathing throughout the flight? Or the one who kicks back and sleeps all the way? As the poet put it: "Great faith and little faith alike Were granted safe convoy; One had the pangs of needless fear, The other all the joy."

When traveling the uncharted skies from death below to life in heaven, it's best to let Jesus fly the plane. He's the only One who went this way before and still lives to tell about it. But don't be like the lady clutching her grocery bag on her lap. Jesus, who **Gives Us True Repentance**, wants you to put your burdens down and trust the plane, God's Word and sacraments to carry them too. **"In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength."** (Isaiah 30:15) Be at peace in Jesus. Amen.