

SERMON FOR MARCH 6, 2022

TEXT: LUKE 4: 1-13

THEME: IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness **2** for forty days, being tempted by the devil.

In the name of Jesus:

If you were planning to go to the Holy Land on a tour of the places where Jesus walked and conducted His ministry, you would probably see in a brochure advertising such a trip. The trip would be titled: Walking in the footsteps of Jesus. And if you were to take this trip, you would in a way be walking in His footsteps, visiting the place where He was born, seeing the Sea of Galilee where He calmed the storm, walked on water, and directed Peter to cast his nets into the water to catch a multitude of fish. You would travel to Jerusalem, visit the site of the Temple, the place where He was crucified, laid in a tomb, and visit the place where Jesus rose from the grave. All in all you would see the sights and in one sense walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

As Christians, though, we are called to walk in His footsteps everyday of our lives, and we see in our text, the way that Jesus trod, and we as Christians are called to live our lives following Him. But what does that look like for us today, what does it really mean to follow in and to walk in the footsteps of

Jesus? Is it merely reduced to taking a tour to the land where Jesus lived, or is there more to it?

To follow in the footsteps of Jesus is not something that anyone of us can do. None of us have the power or the ability to do the things that Jesus did. Not only can we not walk in the land where Jesus walked, but we can't live the way Jesus lived. Jesus is perfect, we are not. Jesus is the sinless Son of God, we are not. Jesus lived to do the will of His Father in heaven. As sinners we can wear wrist bands with the phrase: "What Would Jesus Do," but the reality is that we don't do what Jesus did. We sin in thought, word, and deed. We can't be like Jesus. We don't have the power nor the ability to be like Him. To be certain, we are poor, miserable, wretched sinners.

But our God is good and gracious. He loves us with an everlasting love. He knows that we are sinners, and that our future is death. That is why God so loved the world that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to be our Savior. To be your Savior. And that is the point of our text for today.

Luke records that Jesus was baptized by John. There the Father spoke from heaven "This is My Son," and the Spirit landed on Jesus' shoulder, anointing Him and sending Him on His mission to seek and save the lost. Immediately after Jesus' baptism, the Bible says that the Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. There in the wilderness Satan threw

the proverbial kitchen sink at Jesus, tempting Him, twisting Scripture and misinterpreting the Word, lying and deceiving Jesus all in an effort to bring Jesus down and to lead Him down the path of sinfulness. But in all of this, Jesus never sinned. He was tempted as you and I are tempted, in the wilderness and at other times in His life and ministry, but Jesus never sinned. He faced temptation and defeated sin, Satan, and death for you, for me and for everyone. Jesus walked the walk for you. He was tempted for you and after His temptations in the wilderness, the Bible says: “ And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.” Jesus had a respite from the attacks of the Devil.

In your Baptism the Holy Spirit has placed you in Christ. All of Jesus' righteousness is now yours, your sins are forgiven, and you are a beloved child of God. Jesus has exchanged His perfect life for your sinful life. The suffering and wrath of God that you deserve was placed upon Him. He who knew no sin became sin for you. The Holy Spirit has given you faith in Jesus, He assures you of the forgiveness of all of your sins. And now the Spirit sends you out into the world, into a worldly wilderness filled with anger and strife, with all types of sins and temptations, following in the footsteps of Jesus.

That is what it means to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. The life of a Christian, the life of one who believes in and follows Jesus is a life that is

marked and filled with trials and temptations, with suffering and even death. Jesus says that if anyone would follow Him let him take up the cross and follow. The Christian life is one marked by the cross.

Many Christians, and sadly many others, think and believe that once a person becomes a Christian then life becomes a bed of roses, and that the follower of Christ lives life on Easy Street. That isn't the case at all! Yes, it is true and a fact that we are blessed by God, with all sorts of physical blessings as well as the blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation. But in Baptism, you and I have been marked by Christ. We wear the sign of the cross, we are numbered with the saints and with the Lord, and all the while, we are marked as the enemy of Satan, and the Devil continues to tempt and attack, all in an effort to separate us from Jesus now and into eternity. That is why the Bible says that the Devil is like a roaring lion, seeking whom He can devour. Satan seeks and tries to devour you, to swallow you whole. But you have been placed in Christ. Nothing can separate you from Christ and His love. So that when you are tempted and tried, you have One on your side, Jesus, who was victorious for you, and who gives you the strength in His Word and Sacraments to withstand the assaults of the Devil, walking and following Jesus in your life, so that you can live your life to the glory of God.

Following in the footsteps of Jesus isn't a place or a location you can travel to. Following Jesus isn't even a series or a set of laws to live by or rules to follow. Following Jesus is being baptized in the name of Christ, and having the identity of a child of Christ. It is a baptismal identity, where each day you remember your Baptism, you repent of sin, and trust in Christ as Savior, then in thankfulness you live your life following Him.

Too many people mistake the church building for what the Bible means about the Church. To be clear, the Bible talks about the Church strictly in one sense, the Church is the Body of Christ, sinners who believe in Jesus and who follow Jesus in their lives. That is why the early Christians weren't called Christians but rather were known as The Way, for they followed Jesus who was the Way, Truth, and the Life.

Following Jesus isn't just about going to church, where you come to church on Sunday, punch the time clock and live as a Christian for an hour or two, then leave and punch out on the timeclock, thereby living your life the way the rest of the world lives. Rather, following Jesus IS about coming to Church on Sunday, remembering your Baptism, hearing His Word, receiving the Lord's Supper, and then being blessed by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to go out into the world to live your life as the Church, as the Body of Christ in the world. It is about being shaped and formed in the image of Christ in Baptism,

Word, and Supper, and empowered to re engage in the daily mundane grind of life with a love for Christ and a zeal to share the love of Christ with others. To follow in the footsteps of Jesus is to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to live for Christ in the midst of a variety of trials and temptations, to receive and rely on His strength, and then to return to worship on Sunday to receive the respite we need knowing that in the end, the Lord Jesus will take us home to be with Him where we will experience eternal rest in heaven.

You are members of the Body of Christ. You are called to follow Jesus. Not as an individual. Not in isolation, separated from one another and separated from the world. You are baptized! Free from the bondage and punishment of sin! Christ lives in and through you, so that the life you now live is a life led by the Spirit and filled with the Spirit, living your life connected with others in the Church, serving others in love, and in doing so, you are really FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS.

Amen