

## “Fulfilling All Righteousness” – Mark 1:12-13

My plan was to preach on temptation this morning. I was going to tell you how to resist temptation like Jesus did. But as I studied and as I prayed, God the Holy Spirit showed me just how wrong-headed I was. It is really inconvenient because the original sermon title has been on the web site for weeks! In fact, it's still there. Despite that, I had to change direction, because you can't resist temptation like Jesus did. I can't either. None of us can. Because Jesus is God, and you are not. If you could resist temptation like Jesus did, He wouldn't have had to come to earth.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is everything that God is. He is eternal, having no beginning and no end. He is omnipotent – all powerful. He is omniscient – knowing all things. He is omnipresent – filling His creation. He is the eternal Word of God: *Ho Logos*.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. (John 1:1-3)*

He is the Agent of creation. Not only did He speak the worlds into existence, He holds all things together by the word of His power. (Hebrews 1:3)

Jesus has always been the Son of God. He has always been God. But at a point in time, about 2,020 years ago, He became the Son of man. Jesus entered the world He created and lived a life that was completely human. In doing so, He consciously limited Himself. Theologians call it **kenosis**.

Keep your place in Mark and turn with me to Philippians, chapter 2.

*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, **but made Himself of no reputation**, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:5-8)*

Jesus was still God while He walked on the Earth, but when He was conceived in the virgin's womb, He took on an additional nature, that of a human being. He is just as human as you are, just as human as I am except for the fact that He never sinned.

*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)*

Our Lord voluntarily limited Himself by becoming a human being. Becoming human came with certain restrictions. He could only be in one place at one time. He needed to eat, drink and sleep. He could feel pain. He could suffer and bleed. And He could die.

As a human being, Jesus chose to be completely submissive to the Father's will and He chose to be guided exclusively by the Holy Spirit. All the miracles He performed, He executed by the power of the Spirit. Rather than assert His divine rights as God, He chose to identify with us. He exercised perfect obedience, even to the point of death.

So, as Jesus began His public ministry, everything He did was by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was perfectly obedient. He was passively obedient in that He never sinned and He was actively obedient in that He fulfilled all righteousness. In doing so, He submitted

to the baptism of John, a baptism of repentance, even though He had no sin to repent of. The Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form and the Father declared:

*"You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mark 1:11)*

And then, right of the bat, the Holy Spirit led our Lord into a most difficult trial.

*Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him. (Mark 1:12-13)*

As is typical of Mark, his description of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness is really quite concise. Matthew takes 11 verses to describe this event. Luke takes 13. (As homework, I'd like you to read those two accounts. The references are in your bulletin.) But Mark takes only two. He doesn't say anything about the nature of the temptations. He has no dialogue with Satan. He doesn't show us how Jesus refuted Satan's attempts by correctly quoting Scripture. He simply says He was "tempted by Satan".

However, because Mark is so concise, we ought to pay very close attention to those things he does say, because they must be pretty important. So, let's start with that first phrase: *Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness.*

It starts with Mark's favorite word: "immediately". That word, *euthus* (εὐθύς) in the Greek, shows up 42 times in Mark. It is only used 12 times in the rest of the New Testament. It's an action word. It gives us the sense that things are progressing with a bit of urgency. God has His plan of redemption, and it will not be delayed or thwarted in any way.

And then there is another word I find really interesting. The Holy Spirit drove - *ekballō* (ἐκβάλλω) - Jesus into the wilderness. It's a strong word, meaning to forcibly eject. Both Matthew and Luke use a different word, which is rendered "led" - *anagō* (ἀνάγω). The difference is striking to me. *Anago* seems a bit nicer, almost passive, like the Holy Spirit said "Okay Jesus, now follow me out into the desert." *Ekballo* is more like "Hey, get your fanny out there!"

I believe Mark is emphasizing the fact that Jesus was compelled by the Holy Spirit to go out into the desert. There really was no choice, because Jesus was going to be perfectly obedient. Not only would Jesus never engage in a sin of commission, He would never engage in a sin of omission. He would always do exactly what the Father would have Him do. That's active obedience

Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days. That number should be familiar to you. When God destroyed life on earth with the flood, He caused it to rain 40 days and 40 nights. (Genesis 7:12) After Moses killed the Egyptian, he spent 40 years in Midian tending flocks in the desert. (Acts 7:30) Moses was on the mountain for 40 days receiving instruction from God. (Exodus 34:28) The Israelite spies would spend 40 days checking out the promised land. (Numbers 13:25) Then, after most of the spies gave a bad report, the nation would wander in the wilderness for 40 years. (Deuteronomy 8:2-5) Before Samson delivered them, Israel was in submission to the Philistines for 40 years. (Judges 13:1) Goliath taunted the armies of Saul for 40 days until David showed up to knock him in the noggin with a rock. (1 Samuel 7:16) When Elijah ran from Jezebel, it took him 40 days and 40 nights to get to Mt. Horeb. (1 Kings 19:8)

What is it about this number 40? It seems that God has specifically chosen this number to indicate a time of trial or a time of judgment. It is not exactly symbolic, because 40 days

means exactly 40 days, but I think God uses this period of time to stir something in our memories. This is a time of severe trial, a time of serious testing.

By the way, in each of these cases, somebody failed a test. In some manner, human beings fell short. The Old Testament is, in many ways, a story of human failure. But Jesus wouldn't fail His test.

Satan, the arch-enemy would do the testing. Now, you understand that Satan can't do anything unless God allows it, don't you? God didn't tempt Jesus; He never tempts anyone to sin. But He does allow Satan to tempt you, then superintends the result for His own purpose. God allowed Jesus to be tempted because our Lord needed to succeed where Adam failed. He had to be perfectly obedient, in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Mark adds the phrase *and was with the wild beasts*. That's not something we see in Matthew or Luke. I find it a bit odd that Mark, as concise as he is, chose to include it. I don't think we need to read a whole lot into it, except that Mark wants to emphasize the fact that Jesus was completely alone in a wild and desolate place.

He also says that the angels ministered to Him. We learn from Matthew that this was after Jesus rebuffed Satan's best shot.

*Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.  
(Matthew 4:11)*

Those angels didn't help Jesus resist the temptation; that's important for you to understand. Jesus won this victory entirely on His own, as a human being. Because He won the victory, you never have to resist temptation on your own. Ever. In fact, you cannot resist temptation on your own. You need to let the Spirit of Christ come along side you in every circumstance.

This was not a fun time for our Lord! Imagine how you would feel if you went on a 40 day fast, utterly alone, in this harsh and desolate place. 40 days without food! I don't know about you, but I would be weak, maybe even delirious. We learn from Matthew that this was after 40 these days of fast that Satan pounced. Jesus, in His humanity was most vulnerable.

Compare this test with the one Adam and Eve faced in the garden.

*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."  
(Genesis 2:16-17)*

They weren't hungry; they had more than enough to eat. In fact, they had a great variety of the most delicious food you can imagine. It seems like a pretty easy test to me. Don't eat of that one tree ... that's it. But they failed.

Jesus didn't fail. Jesus never fails. He came to earth on a mission, and he was singularly determined to complete His mission perfectly. The Spirit drove Him to the wilderness to confront Satan. Satan gave it his all, but he didn't have a chance. Jesus prevailed where Adam failed. He fulfilled all righteousness, not only by resisting Satan's temptation, but in every aspect of His human life. And because Jesus fulfilled all righteousness, He has every right to transfer His righteousness to you. He will transfer His righteousness to you, if you will accept it. If you will only believe.

That is an amazing transaction. I spend a lot of time talking about the fact that Jesus takes our sin upon Himself.

*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)*

*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)*

It's really important, because a holy, just God cannot wink at sin. Every sin must be punished. But you get to choose who takes the punishment. You could take it yourself – that's a really bad idea. Because if that's your choice, you are going to spend eternity separated from God, enduring more agony than any of us can imagine. *The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23)* and it is an eternal death ... wishing you could just cease to exist, but the suffering will go on forever.

It's infinitely better to let Jesus pay for your sins. He's already done it. All you have to do is accept it. All you have to do is believe. Place your faith, your trust in His finished work.

But when you confess Jesus as your Lord, and believe God raised Him from the dead, you participate in a two-way transaction. Not only does Jesus take your sin upon Himself, He imputes His righteousness to you. So, judicially, in the eyes of God, it is as if you had never sinned at all. Now that's a great deal! You trade your sin for Jesus' righteousness.

And remember what God said of Jesus?

*"You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mark 1:11)*

If you have Jesus' righteousness, God will say the same thing to you. Let that one soak in for just a moment. If you have trusted Jesus, God calls you a son, or a daughter. And He is well-pleased with you, despite the fact that you have been guilty of cosmic treason. Don't take my word for it; take it from the Apostle Paul:

*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. (Romans 8:16-17)*

Children of God! And joint heirs with Jesus Christ!

*In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:11-14)*

This is possible because Jesus fulfilled all righteousness. He succeeded where Adam failed. And He makes His righteousness available to you.

Won't you just trust Him? Won't you just turn your life over to Him and cry "Jesus, You are my Lord and my God!"? Lay your sins at the foot of His cross and accept His righteousness in exchange. And then praise Him with every breath that you take from now until forever!