

1st Sunday in Lent
Text: Genesis 3:1-21
Theme: Run!

In today's Gospel lesson it says that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. God never does that to us. He never leads us into temptation. On the other hand, we are never called to be like Jesus and follow the devil around as He tempts us. Jesus was a huge exception to the rule. When we are confronted with temptation, there is only be one choice for Christians. That choice is "Run!"

I. As Christians we should always run from temptation.

If we don't, we will always fall at some point. There are a lot of examples of this in the Bible. The devil tempted Eve to doubt God and take a look at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. She saw that the tree was good for good, pleasing to the eye, and desirable for gaining wisdom, so she took some of the fruit and ate it. It was apparently the first time that she ever looked at the tree. Her husband came with her. He fell right into temptation too. It didn't look bad, and they thought that they could learn something from the experience. It didn't take long for them at all to fall.

King David watched as his neighbor took a bath on her roof. He could have turned away or gone down into the house. Instead he called her to the palace. Before you knew it, a baby was conceived, and the woman's husband was dead.

Peter had the courage to follow Jesus right to the home of the High Priest. It really does sound courageous. But there he was among all the enemies of the Lord. They began to recognize him as one of the Lord's disciples. Again, it did not take long until he was denying his Lord with curses.

We can all relate to these people in the Bible. We were tempted to go somewhere or look at something where we knew that we should not have been. We figure that we will be strong. It does not take long until we fell hard. Paul writes about this in 1 Corinthians 10:12, "*So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!*" So often we think that we are doing well against temptation. We put ourselves in a bad situation, and before you know it, we've fallen.

The Bible is clear that we should always flee temptation. In that same chapter of 1 Corinthians Paul writes, "*God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out, so that you can stand up under it.*" Notice that Paul writes, that God will provide "a way out." He will give an escape route, to get out of there, and we should use it. There are also great examples of this in the Bible. In 1 Corinthians 6:18 Paul writes, "*Flee sexual immorality.*" When Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife, it says that he ran from her. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul warns Timothy against greed. Then he writes, "*But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.*" (1 Tim 6:11) Both Peter and James call us to resist the devil, standing firm in the faith. In those cases our eyes are not on the temptation, but on Jesus. The best thing that we can do when temptation comes calling is to get out of there and focus on the Word of God, which teaches us how to lead a good and righteous life.

Think of all of the trouble and pain that you would have saved yourself in life, if you would have known the Word of our Lord in that situation and gotten yourself out of there. When it comes to temptation, we should always run away.

II. When we do fall, we get up and run to Jesus.

The worst thing that we can do is to run from God. That's what Adam and Eve did. They hid from God. He found them. Then they looked for other people to blame for what they had done. Adam blamed both Eve and God. Eve said, "The devil made me do it." They were not willing to say, "I have sinned against the Lord." David kept trying to cover up his sin when he committed adultery with Bathsheba. It got to the point that he even had her husband killed. Judas was filled with remorse after Jesus was condemned to death, but He didn't run to Jesus for forgiveness. He confessed, "*I have betrayed innocent blood.*" Then he dealt with his sin himself. He took his own life. Revelation 6:15ff speaks of how the great and lowly of the earth will flee when Christ returns, but there will be nowhere to hid.

When you have sinned and fallen into temptation, don't run from God by covering up your sin, blaming other people or excusing it. It only makes things worse. God knows every sinful deed that we have done. He knows exactly how corrupted all of our hearts are with sinful desires. There is nothing that we can hide from him. If we try, it is like when Adam and Eve tried to cover their shame with fig leaves. I have seen fig leaves, and they do not cover much at all. If we run from Jesus, we will destroy ourselves like Judas did or feel as David did in Psalm 32, "*When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.*" (Ps 32)

We trust in God's forgiving love through Jesus Christ. Adam and Eve were standing before God in their shame and guilt. What was the first thing that God did? He promised them a Savior, who would defeat the devil, while being mortally wounded Himself. The prophet Nathan convicted David of His sin and said, "*You are the man!*" David responded, "*I have sinned against the Lord.*" Nathan responded, "*The Lord has taken away your sin.*" David would write about this experience, "*Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord' – and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*" (Ps 32:5) St. John writes, "*My dear children, I write this to you, so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins.*" (1 Jn 2:1) Jesus Christ was actually led into temptation, but He never gave in. Then He offered His sinless life in our place on the cross. As He suffered, He was tempted to come down, but He suffered God's wrath in our place. But His innocent suffering and death, He crushed the head of Satan, and won for us the gift of everlasting life.

When you sin, run to Jesus, confess your sin to Him, and He will lift you up. Hear His Word of absolution, "I forgive you all of your sins." Receive His body and blood in His Supper, which were given and shed for the forgiveness of our sins. Run to His gracious arms, and you will find that His will cleanse you of all of your sins and cover you with His pure righteousness.

When it comes to temptation, we never stand up and fight. It doesn't matter if we are dealing with a temptation to sin or the guilt of a sin that we have fallen into. God wants us to run. We flee from temptation, but when we do fall, God wants us to get up and run to the forgiving, gracious arms of our Savior. May God give us that endurance to run to Jesus whenever temptation or guilt come calling. Amen.

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**Prayer of the Church
First Sunday in Lent
1 March 2020**

Merciful Father, though You warn us to flee from temptation, so often we pursue it. Give us wisdom to avoid temptation, and when we do fall, give us faith that we will trust in Christ's forgiving love for us. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Merciful Father, though sin left us isolated and alone, Your Son restored us to You and made us a part of Your Holy Christian Church. Continue to give Your Church faithful pastors to speak Your Word and administer Your Sacraments. Give us faithful workers who care for us in Your name. Grant that we may be kept in this faith, teach it to our children, and do the good works that you glory. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Merciful Father, we thank you for the many material possession that you have given to us. Deliver us from all forms of greed and jealousy. Teach us to use what You have provided to help those in need and to relieve the poor, the unemployed and the oppressed. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Merciful Father, Bless us with wise and faithful leaders who will preserve our freedom and inspire us to use our liberty for noble purposes. Guide all those who make, judge and administer our laws in the nation, state and all the localities where we live and work. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Merciful Father, though we deserve nothing of Your kindness, You have shown Yourself to be the strength of the weak, the healer of the sick and the hope of those who mourn. Hear us on behalf of those who are troubled in mind or body, the dying and those who grieve, [*especially _____,*] that in their afflictions and pain You may sustain and heal them according to Your gracious will and deliver them to everlasting life in Christ, our Savior. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Our Father...