**Matthew 4:1-11 March 1, 2020**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes from our Gospel lesson, Matthew chapter 4, here re-reading these words. “Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

There are only two Pastors in the entire LCMS with the last name Sherry. I do not come from a long and prestigious line of Sherry men who were pastors, the history books will not show tens or hundreds of generations of my family going into the same calling. Is it that way for you? Do you or did you do the same job or the same things that your Father or Mother did in their lives? Did history repeat itself in your life, as it did for them, as you took over the family business, or as you eventually shared the same title as they did? Or did you break the trend? Did you go off on your own way and find a life outside of the norm of what your family experienced for generations upon generations?

As we know from studying history, history generally tends to repeat itself in many ways. Living in Kansas for 5 years taught me that there’s a reason they call it the “family farm”. Chances are if you were born to a farmer, you grew up to be a farmer. It’s the same way in many other professions and callings. Usually those who served in the military have children who do the same, as well as with Law Enforcement, Bankers, businessmen and women, we talked about the example in my own life of church work, and really it could be any family businesses that gets passed on down to the children. History repeats itself, until history is rewritten. Suddenly you go off and do your own thing, you buck the trend, you follow a calling that is outside of anything that your family has experienced. It’s what my Father did. No one in our family was a Pastor until he was. My Grandfather served in the military and opened a store in Detroit for a while. He was a businessman, and yet my father, is a pastor.

History can change, it can be rewritten and the norms of a way of life can be drastically different as time goes on. But for the generations of man that came after Adam and Eve, one thing remained constant. Sin. Sin came into the world through the actions of man, the deliberate disobedience of Eve who took the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that they were forbidden to eat from and ate it, tempted by the serpent in the Garden, and the silence of Adam, who went along with everything Eve did and joined in when offered the same fruit. For generations, upon generations, from the very first humans in the existence of the world, one constant has remained, we all are born with sin. We all actively commit sin. Paul sums it up in our Epistle lesson. “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—“ History has been repeated countless times, which is why we can’t just blame our parents for the fact that we are sinful. While we are conceived in sin and born in sin, we also willfully give in to the temptations of our adversary the devil. When faced with temptation from Satan and his demons, we lose. We fail. We disobey God’s clear commands. We give in and fall into the trap. Satan is described as many things, from crafty, the prince of lies, and here in our Gospel lesson Matthew sums up his work very simply by calling him “the tempter” He tempts, we fail. He entices us with that which we know is wrong, and man falls into the trap and sins. It was a reality from the time that Adam and Eve did it so many years ago, and it still happens today.

We aren’t immune to it, and no matter how much we pray to God to lead us out of the temptations of our enemy we face them every day. We face them here in this house, as our minds are tempted to wander, as our eyes and ears are easily distracted, as our sinful self wants nothing more than for this sermon to stop, for me, your Pastor, to skip all of the hymns and liturgy from this point, to make up some excuse why Church should be shorter than usual, and you can just go home and relax right now. Well, I’m afraid that’s not going to happen. But that is the very nature of our response to falling into temptation. Excuses. From the moment that Adam and Eve fell into sin, our response to our failing in the face of temptation is excuses. Adam turned and blamed Eve and in reality, pointed the finger at God, saying “It was the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree.” Eve blamed the serpent and we had the example of how we naturally respond to sin. It’s not our fault, it’s someone else’s. It’s Satan’s, he made us do it. It’s the world around us, we are just products of our environment. It’s our families, we’re inclined to do certain things, it’s just the norm for us in our lives. Study of families can give us the excuse, that our great-great-grandparents struggled with something, or there is a history of addiction, or violence, or anger in our family. So it’s not our fault, it’s how we’re wired, it’s out of our control. It’s just in my nature to be that way, don’t blame me. The excuses pile up, just as they did for countless generations before us, but just as they held no weight when Adam and Eve used them, they don’t hold any weight now. Sin is sin. Disobedience can’t be tolerated, and with sin comes punishment, the punishment that Adam and Eve both received, as they went from the reality of fellowship with God, walking with him in the cool of the day, to being thrown out of the Garden, into the wilderness, to tasting death and returning to the dust of the Earth. You heard it on Wednesday, it’s a theme of not just Ash Wednesday but all of Lent, and Adam and Eve illustrate it perfectly. “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” A reality we all face, as we too will die and return to dust, just as they did.

History has repeated itself for countless generations, sinful children born to sinful parents, who have sinful children of their own. Man faced with temptation and giving in to temptation again and again, nothing changing, falling deeper into depravity, unable to save ourselves. That is, until the light of the world came, until Jesus was born, until the promised Messiah came to do battle against our enemy and destroy him. Which is why just as Adam and Eve were thrown out of the garden into the wilderness, Jesus was driven by the Holy Spirit, or even as it’s translated was “thrown out” into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted for 40 days. History was repeating itself, man would be tempted, man would fail. But this time things were different. No longer was the weakness of man going to take over, because Jesus was different. Begotten of the Father from eternity, conceived of the Holy Spirit, He was true God. Yet, remained man. He was hungry, tired, and tempted. He faced everything that we did. He was tempted in his hunger to use his divine power to help himself and no one else. He was tempted to see that He would not die if He put God to test. He was tempted with all the power of the world, something that humanity has yearned for and been drawn to since the Fall into sin. And in the past man fell. Eve ate the fruit seeing that it looked tasty. Adam standing nearby, saying nothing when he knew the truth, and choosing to eat the fruit along with his wife. Countless generations tested God, called out to God for signs, ignoring the ones that God had already put before them in their lives. Man has always given in to the allure of power, seeing themselves as higher than God and worshipping themselves or even Satan to get more in the lives they have here on Earth. But not Jesus. Using the sword of the Spirit, the very Words of the Law given by God, he refutes Satan. He destroys the tempter’s lies. He stands in the face of sin and prevails, remaining perfect. While every other human had failed, from generation to generation, from Adam all the way to you, Jesus succeeded. Jesus won the victory over Satan. Jesus rewrote history.

But not for himself. This victory was just a shadow of what he truly came to accomplish, as the Lenten Journey begins with the temptation, but ends with Christ’s death on the cross. Jesus came to this world, but didn’t rewrite his own history, He remained obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. He didn’t come to find a way to save his own earthly life, instead he came to give it up, to rewrite your history. To drastically change the path that you were on, which was one of destruction. He didn’t come to make his life easier here on Earth, He came to save you. Because he loves you. He came to die for you, not because you earned it, not because your family for generations upon generations showed love to God and worshipped him. No, he came to save you out of mercy and compassion. He was tempted just like you to show that He knows what you have gone through, that he understands what it is to face hunger and temptation, and that he overcame all of those things, to take you to be with Him in heaven. The history of the world was changed in that moment, for as Paul writes. “For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”

History has changed, and for the better. You are no longer shackled to the death and destruction that is a result of sin. So go forward as free from this point on. Don’t remain shackled to the guilt of your sin, but feel the comfort and knowledge of knowing that Jesus paid for it and has forgiven it by dying on the cross. Go forward and leave the old life, of living for the pleasures of this world behind. Go free, and know that You are saved, and you are loved. Know that in your future you will be with God, no matter what job you have, no matter what path you take. He has promised to be with you, to watch over you, to take care of you. Go in peace and serve the Lord.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.