

Sermon by Susan Evancho  
The 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent- 2/22/2026  
At Christ Church Quaker Farms, Oxford, CT

***“One does not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”***

All of us are so familiar with this passage and Jesus’s retreat for 40 days in the desert. Who of all people should he meet... the devil. I think we all can relate, I believe, we’ve all had encounters with that guy!

In the book of Romans in today’s reading, we are reminded... As sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned - sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. This retreat leads us to before Jesus’s ministry. These 40 days of tempting is symbolic in our own Christian journey.

The first temptation is that of the “body” – appetites. Keep in mind these are things are of the body... “the soul is willing, but the flesh is weak.” As in Matthew’s gospel when Jesus sees the disciples asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane. It serves as a warning to be vigilant against temptation or an explanation for why good intentions fail. When does this occur? The greatest example is New Years resolutions. I am going to stop eating sugar/carbohydrates, overeating, I am joining a gym, I will give up smoking and even some not involving our actual bodies but our spiritual improvement, I will be more tolerant of that coworker, I will be quick to listen and slow to speak. We are human and so, a lot of these “great intentions” go by the wayside. Jesus reminds us in his first temptation that if the soul resists this type of temptation (i.e., all the bodily appetites), there is no reason for the devil to continue tempting in this way because the soul has fortified itself against it. How did Jesus strike against and resist this evil, he used scripture. “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God”.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> temptation “Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple” Satan brings Jesus to the pinnacle of the Temple in Jerusalem, challenging Him to prove His divinity by throwing Himself down, misquoting Psalm 91 to suggest divine protection. This temptation focuses on presumption, urging Jesus to force God’s hand rather than trust in His timing. Jesus replies, "It is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God'"

How does this relate to us? ...we are often tempted with that... “wow, what that person says sounds so creditable and logical maybe they’re right.” They often are dynamic speakers and seem to infiltrate us at our most vulnerable moments. and we must be vigilant to protect ourselves from this. In Matthew 7:15-16

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

Or in Genesis the devil convinces Eve... "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." We are not Jesus, (we cannot even fathom his ways, his ways are not our ways")

How do we do this? Go back to the teachings of Jesus. Know scripture and be strong in your conviction. "I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; I will guide you with my eye. From the 32nd psalm today. How ironic, Psalm 91 was brought to my attention several times this week. I learned of the misquoting of the devil, and then when I was reviewing bible verses of the day... here it comes again to me! God is whispering so listen:

### **Psalm 91**

- <sup>1</sup> Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
- <sup>2</sup> I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress,  
my God, in whom I trust."
- <sup>3</sup> Surely he will save you  
from the fowler's snare  
and from the deadly pestilence.
- <sup>4</sup> **He will cover you with his feathers,  
and under his wings you will find refuge;  
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.**
- <sup>5</sup> You will not fear the terror of night,  
nor the arrow that flies by day,
- <sup>6</sup> nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,  
nor the plague that destroys at midday.
- <sup>7</sup> A thousand may fall at your side,  
ten thousand at your right hand,  
but it will not come near you.
- <sup>8</sup> You will only observe with your eyes  
and see the punishment of the wicked.
- <sup>9</sup> If you say, "The LORD is my refuge,"  
and you make the Most High your dwelling,
- <sup>10</sup> no harm will overtake you,  
no disaster will come near your tent.
- <sup>11</sup> For he will command his angels concerning you  
to guard you in all your ways;
- <sup>12</sup> they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
- <sup>13</sup> You will tread on the lion and the cobra;  
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.
- <sup>14</sup> **"Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him;  
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.**
- <sup>15</sup> **He will call on me, and I will answer him;  
I will be with him in trouble,**

**I will deliver him and honor him.  
16 With long life I will satisfy him  
and show him my salvation.”**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> temptation is thought provoking.... The devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”

Every day we are tempted to “be the best” have power, “I am right”. I live in this house, look at my shiny new toy? My views are right. Putting ourselves on a pedestal. This is one of the most dangerous temptations... Pride...

**Defilement from Within:** Jesus included pride among evil things like theft, murder, and adultery, stating they come from within a person and defile them (Mark 7:21-23).

**Opposes God:** Pride is viewed as self-worship, taking credit for what God has achieved. Jesus warns that "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:14).

How do we combat these natural human tendencies... look to the scripture:

Where do we begin? Time... make time, first thing in the am, talk to God all day.

Commit to learning a scripture verse each day that relates to something you are going through.

If you are thinking, what I am dealing with, is not in the bible, guess what, I can guarantee it is.

How else??? Small groups... well I don't think I can go there, I heard there are bible scholars and bible experts in those groups, yes, that may be true, however there are people like me, who are novices and trying to learn. We learn from each other. Another interesting way I found was using post it notes. I was struggling in my life, and I took bible verses that related to what I was going and wrote the verses all out on post-it notes. The place I had them was in my car! I remember someone coming into my car and saying... what is going on in here?

I explained it was my war room. This comes from a movie in which a woman used her closet as her space to contact with God by lining the closet in scripture verses on post it notes.

Have conversations with Jesus. Lean on scripture to get you through good times and bad, talk to your fellow Christians. Decide to learn scriptures to help you in your life. Come and join a small group. Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

AMEN +