

Luke 4:1-13  
St Mark - March 9, 2025  
The First Sunday in Lent  
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### **Luke 4:1-13**

After his baptism, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written,

'Worship the Lord your God,  
and serve only him.'"

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written,

'He will command his angels concerning you,  
to protect you,'

and

'On their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

### **Angels**

Lent is a time we think about temptation and loss. We think about forgiveness and drawing closer to God. We think about Jesus' death and some of us think about our own death as well.

Not in a morbid or dreading way, but knowing that it is waiting for us. Just as it was waiting for Jesus.

For those of us who contemplate our own death, these words from Brother Curtis Almquist might be helpful:

If you're afraid that you are going to lose your life, or lose some part of life, you don't need to be afraid, even of that. Because it's going to happen. We all are going to lose our lives; we're all going to lose the life that we now recognize. But Jesus assures us that in losing our lives we find life. Not to fear.

This first Sunday in Lent we are reminded that both the devil and angels have a vested interest in our journey toward that inevitable end of this life. For those of us who cling to Jesus it is our journey toward eternal life.

Today's gospel lets us watch as the devil encroaches on Jesus and tells us that even though Jesus passed every test that Satan could throw at him Satan will be back.

The devil waits for an *opportune* time.

He comes to us at *opportune* times. In every failure, every hardship, and every loss we experience the devil waits. Hoping that we will turn away from God.

These moments of deeply felt challenge can be confusing and feel empty, but I've come to believe that these moments are a gift.

Brother Curtis puts it this way,

“So much wisdom is gleaned from what went bad in life. Deep down inside the dark hole of failure, wrong-doing (ours and others’), disappointment, grief and suffering – deep, deep down in that pit of loss – is not emptiness, but rather a treasure which is waiting to be mined. The name of the treasure is “wisdom.” The scriptures say wisdom is better than gold.”

The devil does not like wisdom.

The devil waits for opportune times to pollute us with sin and he tried to pollute Jesus with sin right up to the end. Up until Jesus defeated Satan as Jesus defeated death and rose to life anew.

Jesus had the strength of his Father and the service of angels on his side.

Matthew's telling of this same story (4:1-11) is as long as Mark's is short. Mark's version is only two verses long and in those two verses he speaks of angels ministering to Jesus. (1:12-13)

Matthew ends his version with:

“Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.” (4:11)

Angels were with him then and I’ve come to believe that angels are with us always.

Whenever the devil shows up, angels are with us. Not necessarily to keep the devil’s evil from hurting us, but to strengthen and protect us. To strengthen our resolve to cling to Christ instead of turning away from God.

The New Testament *Letter To The Hebrews* tells us that angels are ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation. (1:14)

Scripture tells us some specifics about the angels Michael and Gabriel. Michael is described as a mighty leader of angels in victory over Satan (Revelation 12:7-8) and Gabriel helped Daniel to understand his visions (Daniel chapters 8 and 9); told Zechariah of the coming birth of his son John the Baptist (Luke 1:11-19); and announced to Mary that she would be the mother of Jesus, the long awaited Messiah. (Luke 1:26-35)

Along with these two mighty angels are many, many, many more.

In the New Testament’s final book, *Revelation*, we are told:

“... the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands...” (5:11) are praising Jesus.

Myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands. That’s a lot of angels. That’s a lot of ministering spirits sent to serve, for the sake of us.

Whenever I see, at the last possible moment, something that allows me to avoid an accident angels come to mind.

When I don’t make a terrible mistake because something stops me ... I think of them again.

When something extremely helpful and totally unexpected comes my way I thank God for the angels sent to serve.

Especially in those very special moments when others marvel at coincidence angels come to mind and I think of these moments as ‘God-incidence’.

Angels, like all those who serve God, are available to us for the asking.

Many years ago I encountered a Buddhist prayer for healing that adapts well to our Christian beliefs.

When sitting with a person in hardship who is asleep or for some other reason silent I pray God's angels to come from far and wide. To surround the person, to guard them, to strengthen the Holy Spirit within them, to comfort and protect them.

I think of angels filling the room. Flying in and swirling above and around the cherished one I am with at that moment.

On moments such as these, moments of extraordinary Grace, I've felt a change in the room. A peaceful and energized presence fills the space. It's unique and difficult to describe.

A easier and more tangible depiction of angels is found in the movie "City of Angels" released in 1998 with Meg Ryan and Nicholas Cage. It shows angels helping countless people throughout the city of Los Angeles. Angels are everywhere.

They are shown in specific acts. Saving mortals from making terrible mistakes, comforting those in need, and guiding people toward the good.

From the scriptures we can see that it's reasonable to imagine angels being everywhere. Angels are discussed in our scriptures, both Old Testament and New, about 300 times. From our scriptures, Bible scholars surmise that there are many millions of them.

Angels were with Jesus throughout his life. Angels, those mighty servants sent by our loving God, served Jesus and they are sent to serve we Christians too.

Throughout this season of Lent I pray that we will all draw closer to God. Remembering to call on Him in times of trouble and in moments of joy. Remembering the Holy Spirit who comforts and teaches us. The Holy Spirit who lives in us.

I pray that we will draw closer to God

Remembering and calling on God's angels sent to guide and strengthen us. I pray that we will live in gratitude for every joy and for every lesson learned. I pray that we will cling to Jesus and the life to come.

Amen.