

The Power of the Spirit

King of Glory Lutheran

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Luke 4:1-13 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ²where 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. ³The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." ⁴Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" ⁵Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And 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. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." ⁸Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" ⁹Then 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, ¹⁰for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' ¹¹and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" ¹²Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ¹³When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Our world is being tested right now. Specifically, the Ukrainian people and people in Russia who do not want war are being tested right now. There is deception and false accusations. The devil tempts Jesus to believe that God is not enough. Yet, because Jesus is filled with the Holy Spirit, He is able to sustain the tests. We too, walking with the Spirit can survive whatever life throws us. Scripture gives voice to our trust.

God's strength, grace and power sustain us in these days. Come, Holy Spirit, come.

I need your help preaching this morning. We need one another this morning to give voice to our belief that God is enough. When I say, "We pray," our collective response will be, "come, Holy Spirit, come." We pray, Come, Holy Spirit, come!

The whole world is being tested right now. Ukrainians are being tested beyond what they thought they could endure as they say good-bye to spouses and children, homes and homeland. While women give birth in bomb shelters, men pick up arms knowing they will likely have to murder another human being. President

Zelensky is facing the greatest trial of his life to empower, encourage, negotiate, and courageously defy. These ordeals are taking place every day, every hour. We pray, Come, Holy Spirit, come!

Russian soldiers who do not want to fight and kill are tormented. Russian citizens who do not want war are filling the streets knowing full well they could be arrested or worse. Ordinary people who don't have access to the truth, remain in darkness while their children are telling them ugly truths of their government. Journalists are threatened to stop their vocation. We pray, Come, Holy Spirit, come!

Nations are being tested while doing their very best to make increasingly complex decisions. They realize those decisions will directly impact the lives of real people for years to come. All of this testing, this kind of adversity will leave its marks on hearts, souls, bodies and nations.

Thus we pray, Come, Holy Spirit, Come.

Jesus, too, was tested in the wilderness by the devil. The word for 'devil' in Greek, is 'diabolos'. It means the Adversary. The false Accuser who destroys relationships. It means, the Slanderer.

This one greets Jesus when He is famished. Playing on His hunger, the Accuser says, "why don't you just turn this stone to bread?" In other words, God won't really provide you food to eat, right?

Then the Slanderer says, "See all these nations below you? See all of them and all their citizens? If you worship me, all this can be yours!" In other words, God doesn't really care who or what we worship. You don't have to worship God.

Then the Devil says, "Throw yourself down off this temple, God will protect you." But in fact, what the Adversary implies is that God might not protect Jesus. That Jesus truly could be hurt.

In all three tests, the Slanderer hints that God isn't enough. The False Accuser blows that little cloud of mistrust out there like a puff of smoke from a cigar. As Dr. David Lose says, "Each (test), in one way or another, names the temptation to give up on God, to come to believe that God is not sufficient to meet one's needs. And it's not that this isn't a reasonable temptation. That is, there are times when, in fact, our needs – emotional, physical, and more – are not met. Does that, however,

demand a shift in allegiance? Does it necessitate the conclusion that God does not care?" (<https://www.davidlose.net/2013/01/luke-4-1-13-2/>)

Have we ever been tempted to give up on God?

"I didn't get the job. God must not care." "My adult child is going through trials, where is God?" "Dad's cancer came back. Couldn't God have prevented it?"

When we believe that God fully loves, is always present and cares for every detail of our lives, then, when each of our desires or requests isn't met, it's natural to think, God is not enough. It's a logical temptation.

The Israelites who wandered for forty years, certainly had those moments of doubt that God had abandoned them. The isolation they experienced, the uncertainty of the future, the nations that came up against them made them wonder. Even they, God's children, asked if God was enough.

Those situations required of the Israelites and of us some spiritual maturity and understanding. God is not like the ATM or pop machine spitting out our every request at the push of a button. We must grow past this limiting idea about God. God sees the larger picture when we cannot. God knows what we need and *if or when* we need it. God also knows how the Holy Spirit can teach us through our trials. So, we pray, Come, Holy Spirit, come!

There it is. That's the key. Way back in verse 1, Luke writes, "Jesus full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness." It was because of the Spirit, that our Lord was able to endure each one of these tests. The Holy Spirit enabled Jesus to think rightly, to believe faithfully, to refuse to be trapped by the idea that God was not enough.

As Christians, God doesn't promise us a life of ease. There are times when God's Spirit does lead us into places of wilderness and confusion. We might not know the way for a period of time, but that doesn't mean, God is not leading. There might be confusion or fear or deep grief, but that doesn't mean God doesn't care. Even death and destruction may come, yet we worship a God who died a brutal death Himself. There is no place where God is not or cannot be. Even in the heart of a narcissistic ruler or a dying soldier.

We pray, Come, Holy Spirit, come!

A life with God is a life lived in and with the Spirit. When we are tempted to believe we are not enough, God's Spirit says, "This is my beloved Son. This is my beloved Daughter." When we are tempted to believe we cannot do anything, the Lord says, "You are healed, take up your mat and walk." When we simply do not know how to pray, the Spirit prays for us in our weakness. We do not need to fall into the temptation we are not enough.

Because God is enough. God provides. God protects. God sustains. God is present. You and I have example after example in our own lives. We see them now in the news. A Polish woman with a child of her own welcomes' Ukrainian mothers and their children into her own house. A Ukrainian mother sees a captured Russian soldier crying and says, "Let's call your mother. I'm sure she would like to know you are alive."

In these days of testing, do not be tempted to believe God is not powerful. The deception is there for our tasting, but through the Spirit, we will not eat of it, for God is the God of our ancestors Abraham and Sarah. Whatever our own trials, whatever the world is facing, God provides to sparrows and angels alike. When we fear, God protects as Jesus welcomed the children to His lap. When we worry, God will sustain like Jesus feeding the 5,000. God holds the dying. God thwarts the avenger, like Jesus overturning the money changers tables in anger. When death comes, God will provide those to wrap the bodies in linens and anoint them with holy oil. May the Holy Spirit grant us faith to believe and courage to act.

Thus we pray, **Come, Holy Spirit, come.**
Amen.