

## First Sunday in Lent

Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17; 3:1-7

How much we wish that Eve had not been so *gullible*, so *stupid*! Was it her simple ways, her ignorance of the situation, that caused such a lapse of good sense? Surely she should have recognized the lies spewing forth from the serpent's mouth. Oh, that we had been there to stop her...or to perhaps join her.

When Eve tried to answer the serpent's question, "Indeed has God [*really*] said...", concerning the command not to eat of the tree, the serpent countered with, "You surely shall not die!" It is certainly wonderful that in our own day we have learned to never try to twist or ignore God's Word to accommodate our own desires. Though, of course, Eve really didn't die ....did she?

The serpent (Satan in snakeskin) then said to Eve, "...you will be like God..." How could anyone think that they could be as wise as God and know what He knows? It is true that many Christians today do regard God's Word as ignorant in places, having been written by men who only had God to inform them as to what was a proper relationship with Him. After all, we are much wiser today and understand things better than....well, not exactly better than God, but....



Moving on with the story, if we read beyond today's lesson, we would see how maturing Eve's experience proved to be for her and her husband, Adam. If we may paraphrase slightly the response of the two when confronted by God (3:11ff), Adam responded, "The woman whom *You* gave to me, *she* gave it to me!" Eve countered, "The *serpent* deceived me...." Apparently this disaster was no one's fault, except maybe God's. At least we now accept the idea of accountability! Or, maybe not.

The Bible doesn't record what the serpent said to all of this, but he probably smiled—he didn't know the end of the story. He thought that he had won, but he was wrong. As Lent begins, we take time to contemplate our own sin as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' victory over sin! Through His death and resurrection, Jesus restored Adam and Eve to paradise. We also have the same wonderful and free gift from our Lord, for we, like Adam and Eve, sin against God daily and would be lost forever without Jesus.

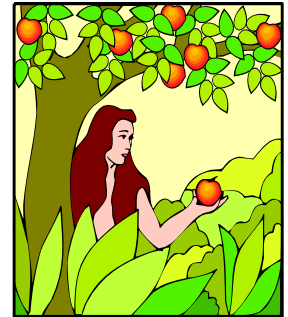
*Study the Bible with friends this week!*

**A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee**

## First Sunday in Lent

Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17; 3:1-7

1. Review the creation account of Genesis 1 and the opening verses of Genesis 2. What did God create on each day? What words introduce each creative activity? What repeated observation did God make about the His creation?
2. Genesis 2:7ff. focuses on the creation of human life. How was the creation of human life different from the creation of other forms of life?
3. What "rule" did God give Adam and Eve (2:16-17)? Was the request unreasonable? Why might God have made this requirement of Adam and Eve?
4. Satan is the master of lies and deception. How do we see and hear his schemes in the garden? How do we see and hear His schemes in our world? In our individual lives?
5. The serpent promises "Your eyes will be opened." (3:5) Were their eyes opened (3:7)? What did they see?
6. How does this Old Testament lesson connect with today's Epistle lessons (Romans 5:12) and the Gospel lesson (Matthew 5:1-11)? Why is this an especially appropriate story for the first Sunday in the Lenten season?



## First Sunday In Lent

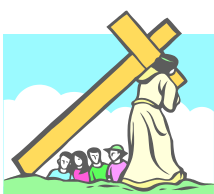
Text: Genesis 22:1-18

We read the story of Abraham's trip to Mount Moriah with his son and think, "Wait a minute—this is not possible." God told Abraham to kill his son and burn him as an offering. Other religions of Abraham's time demanded child sacrifice, but surely our God would not do such a thing.

We find ourselves imagining the journey up the mountain and wondering why Isaac didn't resist being tied up and prepared for sacrifice. He must have realized what was happening, but he submitted to his father regardless of the consequences. Again, it just doesn't make sense to us. Of course, the killing of Isaac didn't happen. God spared Isaac by providing a sacrificial ram just in time to stop the killing.

This all sounds familiar because a similar event occurred almost 2000 years later. Then God again provided a sacrifice to atone for the sin of His people, but it would be the final sacrifice. Again the demanded sacrifice would be a first-born, beloved son, but this time the Son would be killed. Again the Son was obedient, even though he knew that his death was imminent. He obeyed His Father's command in spite of the agony that He endured in the Garden of Gethsemane. He had the power to overcome His enemies, but He chose to die instead.

We have begun the season of Lent, at the end of which we will recall the greatest gift ever given, the sacrifice of the Son of God on Good Friday. We can't fully understand the inner working of the Trinity or how Jesus could be true man and true God but we can understand the



pain that Abraham must have endured as he anticipated his son's death; we can understand the love that he felt for his son. That helps us begin to understand the gift that God was willing to provide for us. Part of what we consider during Lent is the overwhelming love of our God who was willing to send His Son to die in our place. That kind of love is beyond our grasp—we can only thank Him by living for Him.

***Studying God's word is easier with friends. Join a Bible study group!***

*A message from your District Education Committee*



## First Sunday In Lent

Text: Genesis 22:1-18

1. Isaac is called "your only son" (vs. 2). Review Genesis 16; Genesis 18:1-15; Genesis 21:1-21. Was Isaac Abraham's only son? What was special about Isaac?

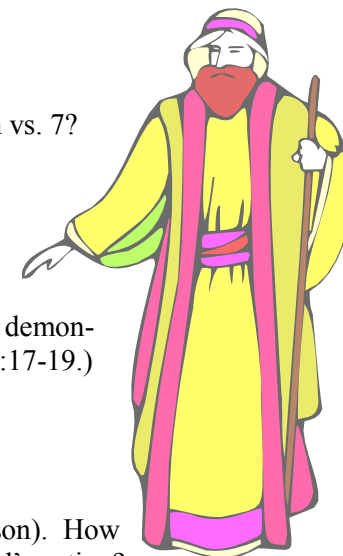
2. What logical question does Isaac ask in vs. 7? What is Abraham's answer?

3. According to vs. 12, how did Abraham demonstrate his faith? (Read also Hebrews 11:17-19.)

4. Read Romans 8:32 (today's epistle lesson). How does Abraham's action foreshadow God's action?

5. How do you think you would have responded to the "test" God gave Abraham? In what ways has God tested you?

6. The song "The Lamb" (All God's People Sing, CPH) reminds us of another Lamb. How is The Lamb significant to this Lenten season?



## First Sunday in Lent

Deuteronomy 26:5-10

In today's lesson God is giving instructions to His people before they enter the land that He has promised to them. They are to remember how God has delivered them from Egypt and brought them to a new land. Now we are in the church season of Lent. We too take time to have a special remembrance of our deliverance by God.

The salvation of the Jews out of Egyptian slavery is sometimes compared to our own salvation out of the slavery of sin. Like Israel, we could do nothing to save ourselves. Sin was too strong in us just as the Egyptian task masters were too powerful for Israel to defeat. Only God could conquer Pharaoh and only God could conquer the sin that we were born into.

In Lent we remember and spend time thinking about our rescue from Satan partly because we cannot fathom the love that motivated God to send His Son with the specific task of dying for a rebellious people. Nor can we understand why Christ would agree to become Man; to be God and Man in an unloving, rebellious world. We might understand if He had come to destroy sinners, but He came to save them from the fires of hell which all deserve.

During Lent some folks will give up some thing in their lives in order to honor God. Unfortunately, we usually give up chewing gum, chocolate, smoking, or some other luxury or habit that we should give up anyway. What God wants us to give Him is more important than these, and more lasting than the season of Lent. Before and after entering the promised land, the Jews of the Old Testament committed the same sin over and over again. They failed to give God their hearts. They settled instead for a life of trying to meet the "minimum payment" that they thought would keep God from deserting them.

This season of Lent let's consider "giving up" our inner hearts to God; allowing Him to enter fully into our lives, not for six Sundays, but forever. Let's consider welcoming Him to be Lord as well as Savior.



**Don't give up Bible study for Lent!**

(A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee)

## First Sunday in Lent

Deuteronomy 26:5-10

1. Who was the "wandering Aramean" (Genesis 46:1-7)? Where had he wandered?

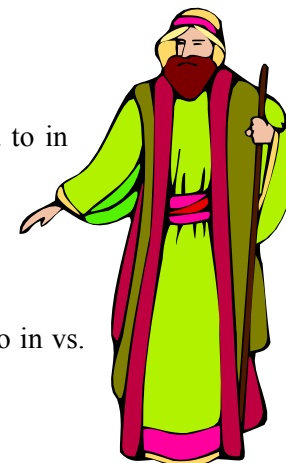
2. What period of Israel's history is referred to in vs. 6-7? (See Exodus chapter 1)

3. What event in Israel's history is referred to in vs. 8? (See Exodus chapter 13-14)

4. We have begun a Lenten season. What even greater rescue has God provided for all of us "wanderers"?

5. Our text is in the context of a stewardship message (See 26:1-4). What is the response of God's people to all that He has given us? Notice the encouragement of vs. 10.

6. This text recounts a journey. What journey does Jesus begin in today's Gospel reading? How will you journey with Jesus during the Lenten season? (Luke 4:1-13)



## First Sunday in Lent

Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17, 3:1-7

Someone recently said that the first unsuccessful diet was in the garden of Eden when Eve was told, “Don’t eat the fruit!” What is there about us that when we are told not to do something, we want to do it all the more? There seems to be no way to help this sin-nature in which we are born and live. Paul said that when the Law came so that we could recognize sin in our lives, we wanted to sin all the more! (Romans 7) Is it any wonder that Satan lurks around every corner, hoping to catch us at a weak moment?

Eve was just strolling through the Garden when she noted an interesting serpent. Temptation usually begins with our curiosity about anything that we haven’t directly experienced. We seem to have an innate assumption that if we haven’t experienced something, we can’t determine if it is bad for us or not. Satan used Eve’s curiosity against her by goading her into believing that God was unfair in His rule; that He was jealous of Eve and the equality she might attain by eating the fruit; that He loved His own power more than He loved Eve. As tricky as he was, however, Satan could not force Eve and Adam to disobey God. That choice was their own.

Since our first parents’ tumble from paradise, we have had no choice. We are born sin-ready. Only in Jesus did we gain forgiveness and rescue from that unavoidable pit of disobedience and rebellion against God. Satan knew that if he could stop Jesus from completing His Father’s plan of salvation, our hope would be gone forever, and we would be doomed to serve evil and suffer eternal separation from our Creator. But, the tricks that had worked on Eve and Adam failed to sway Jesus from His devotion and obedience to His Father.

Jesus made the choice that we could not—He chose to obey His Father and to die for us. Today Satan still tries to tempt us away from God. Though we often stumble and fall, we are forgiven. We can even grow in our ability to say “No!” to temptation because the Holy Spirit who lives in us calls us to Christ, enlightens us about sin, and fills us with faith in our Lord.

**Learn more about Jesus’ faithfulness in a Bible study this week.**

*A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee.*

## First Sunday in Lent

Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17, 3:1-7

1. Review the creation account of Genesis 1 and the early verses of Genesis 2. According to 2:7 what was unique about the creation of man?
2. What seemingly simple act of obedience did God ask of Adam? (vs.16-17) Did Adam and Eve understand His request? (3:2-3)
3. What temptation of Satan (3:5) was too appealing to Adam and Eve? What does it mean that “the eyes of both of them were opened”? (vs. 7)
4. Read on in chapter 3 for the rest of the story (you probably know it from memory). Who does Adam blame for their sin? Who does Eve blame?
5. Satan kept tempting. Read today’s Gospel lesson. (Matthew 4:1-11) Why did Satan try to interrupt Jesus’ ministry? Why are the Old Testament lessons and Gospel lessons especially appropriate as we begin the Lenten season?
6. Surveys indicate that a significant percentage of people do not believe that Satan is truly real (they would suggest that he is a fictitious character symbolizing “evil”). How does this lesson emphasize the reality of Satan? Do we need to fear Satan?

## First Sunday in Lent

Romans 8:31-39

Paul had just stated our value to God. In any situation He is for us and working for our welfare. Paul says that we become more like Christ every day that we know Him. The apostle wrote that in God's eyes we are justified because of the work of His Son.

Then we read what all of this means, *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* What better summation could be written? We live in fear of so many things every day. We allow our fears to affect our mindset, our health, our attitudes, our relationships, and our witness. Paul says that this fear is unnecessary:

*"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Now, that may seem like a lot of text reading and repeating for today's thought, but how could paraphrasing make it any better or any more clear than Paul's own words? God loves us with His whole being. He will not let us fall from His hand and He will not let anyone pluck us from His protection.

The things that try to terrorize us really are fearful, but they are also trivial when set against what God has given us. Knowing Jesus vastly surpasses any dangers we might endure. In another passage Paul says that even the successes that he knew, let alone his fears and suffering, were merely trash in comparison with knowing Jesus, who has given His life that we might know eternal life. (Phil. 3:8)

Today we begin to celebrate Lent. Though we contemplate the death of Christ and our own sinfulness, it is a celebration! We know this certainly because we know the end to the story—Christ's death means our eternal presence with Him! His Resurrection [our next celebration] is the visible guarantee that this is true.

Learn more about Jesus in prophecy in a Bible study this week.  
*A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee*

## First Sunday in Lent

Romans 8:31-39

1. What evidence do we have that God is for us? (vs. 32)
2. The Lenten season has begun. We review the suffering and death of Jesus. What do we know about the end of this story? (vs. 34)
3. According to vs. 35, 38, and 39 what are some of the obstacles that try to get in the way of Christ's love? What else would you add to the list?
4. Read today's Gospel lesson (Mark 1:12-13). How is our experience like that of Jesus? Who is the source of His temptation and ours? Did Satan win? Why not?

### For Family Reflection

5. Family members can tell each other "You're a winner!" Why is this true? What does it mean to you that at the times when someone implies "You're a loser!" you know otherwise?
6. A new church year season—the Lenten season—has begun. How will you focus on Jesus' victory for you? What special emphasis is taking place in your church? How will Lent be a time of family reflection and spiritual growth?

## First Sunday in Lent

Romans 10:8-13

Paul obviously lacked any training in the art of politically correct teaching. Many in today's world would rise up in anger at his implication—no, his insistence—that Jesus is *the* way to God. Even some in our churches would cringe a little and look around to see if anyone objected to such strong language. Paul even goes so far as to say that we must spread the truth of salvation in Christ to the whole world!(vss.14-18) But, that can be dangerous.

Paul lived in a world determined to establish its own righteousness. We live in a like-minded world. The Jews were convinced that they could obey God so well that they could make themselves righteous. The rest of the world either believed the same as the Jews or relied on philosophy or power to establish their own definitions of righteousness. Paul knew, however, that righteousness (being right with God) could only happen through faith in Christ.

Lent has begun—the season of contemplating Christ's death on the cross to pay for our sin and bring us salvation. How important was it? How important was the resurrection that followed? Paul and hundreds of other disciples died because they would not keep quiet about Christ's death and resurrection (and believers continue to die today for the same reason). There was no consideration of keeping quiet for the sake of political correctness or even for the sake of personal safety. Without the cross there was no salvation! Without the empty tomb there was no hope that the gift was real.

Paul was guilty of the cross. Perhaps only Christians who had been Jewish leaders or Roman soldiers had done more harm to Christ's followers. The sin of all of us brought Jesus to the cross where He gave His life that we might live. Because of Christ, we need not fear death. Our pasts can no longer keep us from sharing the gospel with the world. Paul knew, and we know, that friends and community members can find eternal life in no one other than Christ. Bringing them the news of salvation is imperative.

It is a custom among Christians to give up a worldly habit for the six weeks of Lent. What if this Lenten season, we give up silence?

Learn more about Jesus' faithfulness in a Bible study this week.

*A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee*

## First Sunday in Lent

Romans 10:8-13

1. What is the “word” that saves (vs. 8)? Who is that Word? (John 1:14)
2. What is the relationship between the heart and the mouth? (vs.10) See Matthew 15:8.
3. Is it the act of “calling” that saves? (vs. 13) What saves us?

## For Family Reflection

4. We live in a world where differences are often noted. Does God see our differences? According to vs. 12 what unites Christians?
5. Can we be confident of our salvation (vs. 9)? Are you confident of your salvation?
6. The Lenten season has begun. Some individuals and families use this season for a special time of sacrifice and reflection. Is there some sacrifice that your family can make together to help remember Jesus' sacrifice? Is there some special family act of worship that you can dedicate yourself to this special season?

## First Sunday in Lent

Matthew 4:1-11

Satan is real, though he isn't taken seriously in modern society. He continues to withhold salvation from as many people as possible. If the sinners had no Savior, then all would be kept from God. That was Satan's purpose in tempting Christ. If Christ would only sin....

Jesus was not only true God; He was true man. He could have sinned. Unlike us, Jesus was truly able to be perfect, but He was also actually tempted. The end of Luke's account of Jesus' temptation says that the devil "departed from Him until an opportune time." Jesus understands what it is like to be us. He truly knows our every temptation.

Satan misused Scripture to try to trick Jesus. He did the same to Eve. His phrase then was, "Has God really said...?" Eve and Adam fell to temptation, and we do, too. After their sin, we do not have the choice of being sinless. We are now born into their sin of rebellion. In his temptation of Jesus, Satan said, "If you are God..." Satan says to our world, "Since you are gods...." How often do we see our world or ourselves, reject God in favor of sin? Or, as some have explained it, the primary letter in the word "sin" is "I".

Unlike us, Jesus answered Satan's misuse of Scripture with Scripture. He knows His Father. The devil offered Jesus every material possession and earthly glory, but Jesus refuted every offer with the Word.

Because He has purchased us, we belong to Jesus—and we have His forgiveness when we sin. But He also calls us to become more like Him every day. We cannot leave sin and rebellion completely behind; it is part of our nature. But, we can strive to follow Christ rather than our own sinful nature. Yet, there is a problem. How can we answer Satan's temptations without knowing God's Word? Most Christians know very little about the Bible, though Ephesians 6 speaks of the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." May each of us make the time to know God through His Word. Getting to know our Lord is a fascinating journey.

**Learn more about Jesus' faithfulness in a Bible study this week.**

*A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee*

## First Sunday in Lent

Matthew 4:1-11

1. Summarize the three temptations that Jesus faced. How are they the same? How are they different? What is Jesus' consistent response? (Compare Matthew's account with the other Gospel writers—Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13.)
2. When does Jesus' temptation take place in His ministry? (Look back at the end of chapter 3). What is significant about the devil's timing?
3. We are told "angels came and attended him" (vs. 11). What is significant about the angels' appearance? Are angels available to surround us?

## For Family Reflection

4. Would the devil now disappear from Jesus' life? When else would his presence be noted?
5. Is the devil real? In what ways are we tempted? What resources do we have to fight temptation?
6. We have now begun the Lenten season. Why is this an appropriate story to begin the Lenten season? How will you make this a special season to focus on Jesus' journey to the cross? What special devotional or other activities will be part of your family time?

## First Sunday in Lent

Mark 1:9-15

The Holy Spirit “impelled Him” (NASB) to go into the wilderness, where Jesus fasted and was tempted for forty days. He had just been baptized by John and was about to begin His ministry. Why did Satan bother trying to tempt God? Why did the Holy Spirit allow it?

Because Jesus was true Man as well as true God, Satan had a chance! What if Jesus, in His human nature, could be tempted to rule on earth without suffering for the sins of His people? What if He could be tempted to become a consumer of material glory, leaving behind His ministry of love, mercy, and salvation? Then Satan would have the whole world and all of God’s creation as his own for eternity.

The Holy Spirit knew what Satan did not. The devil’s efforts also offered Jesus the opportunity to declare His allegiance to His Father. He was strengthened by God in the midst of the temptations of Satan, because He knew His Father and loved Him above all else. Jesus declared His intention to serve His Father and to save His people through the cross.

We may tremble as we read the story of Jesus’ temptation because we fear that God will allow us to go through temptation, too. It’s a natural fear. We know from experience how often we fail to follow God and choose to follow our own minds. We know how terrible it feels to fail God again and again.

This is where the joy of Jesus’ triumph over temptation comes for us. He, the perfect God and Man, said “no” to Satan for us. Then He walked to the cross to pay the sin debt for us. He was resurrected as assurance to us.

In the season of Lent we consider two things about ourselves—that we are very unworthy, and that we are very valuable. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...”. (John 3:16)

***During this season of Lent, make time for God’s Word.***

(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

## First Sunday in Lent

Mark 1:9-15

1. What happened right before Jesus’ temptation (vs. 12-13)? What happened immediately after the temptation? What is the significance of Satan tempting Jesus so early in His ministry?
2. Mark’s account of the temptation is very brief (two verses). Read about the temptation in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13. What additional details are shared by the other Gospel writers?
3. What was the Spirit’s role in Jesus’ temptation (vs. 12)? Why would the Father allow His Son to be tempted?

### For Family Reflection

4. The temptation lasted for forty days. What other Bible stories involve the number “40”?
5. What are some temptations that we face? Can we, like Jesus, be victorious over the temptations we face? What weapons do we have to fight Satan’s temptations?
6. Read the Sixth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer in Luther’s Small Catechism. What do the words “And lead us not into temptation” mean to you?



## First Sunday in Lent

Luke 4:1-13

Two of the temptations that Satan fired at Jesus strike uncomfortably at our own lifestyles.

Satan challenged Jesus to prove Himself the Son of God by creating bread from a stone. Jesus responded, “*Man shall not live on bread alone...*” The rest of that verse from Deuteronomy reads, “*...but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.*”

How often does Satan succeed in convincing us that we can do just fine on bread alone? You may say, “No, I do not believe that I can live without God.” But do you try? Do you fail to find time for worship? Do you fail to find time for prayer? Do you fail to find time to read God’s Word? None of us always manages to really seek out the God that we claim is essential in our lives.

Satan tried another tact with Jesus. He said, “*I will give you all this domain and its glory....*” Jesus said, “*You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.*” “Ahh,” you retort. “Of that I am not guilty. I worship no idols made by the hand of man.” Don’t you? Is God really your only object of worship? What about the family, the job, success, wealth, self-image, new home, new car, or retirement account? Do any of these ever get in the way of doing the will of God? (And in case you’re wondering--this writer isn’t excluded from these accusations--I plead guilty to them all!)

So much for the bad news. Now to the good. Jesus understands why we fail to resist Satan’s temptations. He is the only Man in history that denied Satan any tiny measure of success, even though Satan would not give up after this first encounter with Jesus. Verse 13 ends with, “*...he departed from Him until an opportune time.*” Satan never did succeed with Jesus, but he does just fine with us. That is why this story of Jesus’ confrontation with Satan is so important to us.

Because Jesus succeeded where we fail; because His perfection allowed Him to pay for all of our sinfulness when He hung on the Cross, we are free to tell Satan “NO!” every time he tempts us. Jesus’ gift of our salvation assures us that we have a place in His kingdom. Every day is a new day for those whose Lord is Christ.

***Is your Bible wearing out from use, or is it in storage?***

(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

## First Sunday in Lent

Luke 4:1-13

1. When in Jesus ministry does the temptation take place? (Look back to chapter 3) What is significant about the timing of the devil’s challenges?
  2. Where did the temptation take place? How long did it last? What three specific temptations does Luke share with us?
  3. How does Jesus respond to each of the temptations? What can we learn from Jesus’ response?
  4. Luke tells us that the devil “departed from him until an opportune time.” When and where would the devil appear again in Jesus’ ministry? Were the devil’s temptations ever successful in stopping Jesus?
- ### For Family Reflection
5. How does the devil tempt you? Can we always be successful in defeating him?
  6. We have begun the Lenten season. What is the focus of the season? How can your family be strengthened in God’s Word this season?