

Invocavit 2025

9 March, Anno Domini 2025

St. Matthew 4:1-11

Beloved of God,

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

The one who is immersed in the Word of God knows that the promises God makes to His dear children, to those who put their trust in Him, are many and they are profound. In fact, they are so profound they almost defy belief. After all, why should God promise you the complete and free forgiveness of all your sins? What have you done to deserve the gift of the Holy Spirit? Why should God promise to you the inheritance of His kingdom? On what basis should God Almighty promise you the protection of His ministers of fire? Anyone who stops to really ponder the depth and breadth of those promises can truly only stand in humble awe of them and give praise and thanks to God who makes them.

And these are precisely what God has promised to you when He baptized you. Far from being a promise of dedication from you to God or a sign that you have personally accepted Him as your Lord and Savior, Holy Baptism is a declaration of Almighty God that you are His own dear child and that He will be to you your heavenly Father. Just as it was with your Lord's Baptism, so it is with yours. Baptism is a declaration of God that He has washed you clean of all the filth of your sins. By His divine Word and promise the judgment that stood against you has been laid instead upon the back of His own dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And because you are now a member of the household of God you will have your daily bread and everything you need to support this body and life, you will enjoy the protection of God and his angels, you will be kept safe and secure as the storms of life come crashing against you, threatening to sweep you away to eternal death. They will be hard and they will be painful, but in Christ you have the promise that they

will not be able to steal you out of God's hand or change any of His promises to you.

The devil certainly knows the vastness of the promises that have been made to you. He knows that you have been lifted up out of his clutches and been seated with Christ at the right hand of God. And while he can't take away what God has given you because he can't undo God's work, he can and will work to bring you to doubt those promises. He will try to draw you to become apathetic to them, disinterested in the inheritance bestowed upon you. He will seek to draw you away from the means by which God gives and keeps you in those promises - your hearing and studying of His Word, calling upon Him in prayer, confessing and receiving absolution, partaking of Holy Communion. Or he will work to make you question and doubt His promises. More importantly, he can work to raise doubt in your mind that those promises are true and sufficient. The liar will ask you "Are you sure God really forgave your sins? Are you sure He really cares about your daily bread? With as deeply as you are suffering are you sure He will send His angels to attend you?"

That's exactly what he did to Adam and Eve in paradise before their will had been corrupted by sin. There in the midst of paradise, where nothing was withheld from them save the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the crafty serpent convinced Adam and Eve that God's Word not only wasn't enough, it was a lie. Why should they believe God? Why should His word concerning the tree be enough? Where's the evidence to back up the claims?

That was enough for our first parents. The devil had plucked the strings of their pride, inviting them to sit in God's seat and demand that God justify Himself. Like the devil himself, Adam and Eve grew dissatisfied with what God had spoken and sought to assert their own will but only found themselves in a losing war with God, subject to His wrath and eternal death.

At the heart of all sin lies this doubt, that God's Word is insufficient and untrue. We doubt that God will follow through or we imagine that there is a good that is being withheld. And so we plunge ahead like fools, madly trying to take what has been forbidden and refusing to believe that God will keep those glorious promises.

But never once has such a course of action proved to bring us good. Never once has God failed to keep a single one of His promises. Never once has He failed to give you exactly what you needed at exactly the time you needed it. As it only can, the Word of the Lord always proves true - He delivered Israel from the hand of the Egyptians, He gave the Philistines into Samson's hands, He delivered the Israelites from their bondage in Babylon, and He sent the promised Seed of the Woman, the Lord Jesus Christ, to once and for all crush the devil and his lies under His pierced and bruised heel for you. This sinless Son of Mary stood under the relentless lies and assaults of the devil who tried time and again to question the legitimacy of the Father's Word - "This is My Beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased." Over and over again the devil called the truthfulness of that declaration into question. "How can God let such suffering befall His supposedly beloved Son? And why should you, Jesus, suffer as you do for these people who hate you and reject you and will crucify you?"

But for Jesus, as it should be for you, the Word and the promise of His Father was enough. It wasn't just enough, it was everything. Nothing else mattered. That Word and that Word alone brought forth all things and sustains all things. That Word is life itself. Every promise spoken by that Word is absolute truth and every promise made is as good as fulfilled. And that Word to you has been sealed with the Blood of the only Son of God, Blood which spilled to atone for your sins so that you would be forgiven and restored to God.

No doubt, the promises which God has made to you are breathtaking and we would have no reason to believe them except that they are promises made to you by God Almighty.

They are not in any way dependent upon or indicated by the situation you find yourself in the moment. You are baptized. You are redeemed. You will have all that you need in this life just as assuredly as you will have your share in the company of the blessed, feasting on the riches of God's eternal kingdom of mercy. Do not listen when Satan calls any of that into question. Say to him with all boldness and confidence "It is written. God HAS spoken. He will do it."

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace that passes all human understanding keep your hearts and your mind in Christ Jesus our Lord.