

Swedenborgian Sunday School Notes for the Revised Common Lectionary

Luke 4:1–13 • Jesus Tempted by the Devil

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Luke 4:1–13 Jesus tempted by the devil
Psalm 91 Assurance of God’s protection

Overview

As we begin Lent, we have a lesson that is both tough and comforting. We all struggle with selfish and destructive feelings and thoughts. So did Jesus! The Lord knows what it is like to battle evil desires and to cope with despair; so we can turn to the Lord when we need help in our own struggles. Our aim today is to let the children know that when they are tempted to do something wrong or simply to give up, the Lord is always there to help—and with the Lord’s help, we can overcome, and become stronger people.

Key Points

- The Lord was tempted more and more deeply throughout his life on earth.
- When we are tempted to do something wrong or to give up in despair, the Lord can help us!
- We become stronger people when we overcome in temptation and stick to what is good and right.

Example for Teaching Children

Today is the first Sunday in Lent. Do you know what Lent is? Lent is the forty weekdays before Easter. It starts with Ash Wednesday, which was this past Wednesday. Many churches observe Lent as a time of being sorry for the wrong things we have done, and sometimes “paying” for our wrongs by denying ourselves something we like—such as ice cream!

In our church, Lent is a time to take a good, close look at ourselves, admit to something that we feel, think, or do that is wrong and hurtful to others, and work on overcoming it with the Lord’s help. This doesn’t happen without a struggle!

In our story today, Jesus struggles against wrong ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. The Lord knows what it is like to face hard choices, and to be tempted to give up! This means we can turn to the Lord for help whenever *we* are having a tough time keeping ourselves on the right track.

Let’s have an example. Can one of you think of something you know you’re not supposed to do, but you sometimes *want* to do? (*Allow them to supply an example, but have one of your own ready in case nobody does. I’ll use the example of shoplifting.*)

Okay, let’s say you are with some of your friends in a store, and one of them says, “Hey, let’s take this thing. Nobody will know!” You know it’s wrong to steal, but your friends are urging you on, and you don’t want them to think you are afraid.

This is a hard decision! Will we do what we know is right, or will we go along with our friends?

We may want to give in so that our friends will think we are strong and brave—just as Jesus was tempted to look brave by jumping off the temple! But really it is because we are afraid of what our friends will think of us. When we give in, we are letting our friends push us around. This makes us *weaker*.

You know what’s the *really* brave thing to do? To say to your friends, “No! It is wrong, and I won’t do it.” Even if we are not strong enough to do this by ourselves, if we remember that the Lord is with us, helping us, we can gain the strength we need. When we do what is good and right, we become stronger! And we help our friends become stronger, too.

Basic Correspondences

the devil = evil desires from hell

Satan = false ideas from hell

stone = outward, material truth

bread = the goodness of love

having earth’s kingdoms = materialistic desires

jumping from the temple = selfish desires

Thoughts from Swedenborg

The Lord’s life, from earliest childhood right through his last hour on earth, involved constant temptation and constant victory. It is clear that this did not end with his temptation in the wilderness because it says in Luke, “After the devil had finished every temptation, he left him *for a time*” (Luke 4:13), and also because he endured temptations right through his death on the cross. . . .

The temptations described in Matt. 4:1–11, Mark 1:12, 13, and Luke 4:1–13 summarize all the Lord’s temptations: that from his love toward the entire human race, he fought against selfish and materialistic loves, which completely fill the hells.

All temptation is an attack against the love that is within us. The level of temptation depends on the level of our love. If our love is not attacked, there is no temptation. Arcana Coelestia #1690