

“The Devil Wears Three Hats”
Mark 1:9 – 13; Hebrews 2:17 – 18

Mark 1:9 – 13:

“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.”

Hebrews 2:17 – 18:

“For this reason he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

This morning I want to build on and piggy back off what we Peter Eaton had to share with us over the last three weeks.

So we have our first reading and we have this short passage which is quite tightly packed.

We see Jesus anointed by the Holy Spirit, encouraged by the voice God the Father, there’s the mention of angels and wild animals.

And in the mix there is another character – Satan.

I don’t know about you, but from my reading of Scripture and my own experience, I am a firm believer that there are other unseen entities often at play in our lives.

What I’ve also discovered is that even among many Christian churches today, talk of the devil meet with sideways glances.

At the centre of the universe there is an all-powerful God who is without equal, without beginning and end. This God is absolutely good and holy and powerful

But God is not the only power at work in our world.

The thing is when you examine Scripture you see that's it not merely human agency that is the sole source of evil and darkness in this world.

I mean, when you look at our world there is so much evil that goes beyond mere human explanation.

God has chosen to create a world in which there are free will agents and decision makers, both human and angelic.

And many of these beings have chosen against God and his purposes. While in no way equal to God these other influences are bent on using their power to mayhem and madness – the chief of these powers is called Satan.

When we come to the Gospels, of the 29 passages which talk of Satan, 25 come from the lips of who?

Jesus, and Jesus is the One whom Christians say is the most in-tune person who ever lived on the planet.

And as you read through the rest of the New Testament, the writers there also spoke of a personified devil.

The Satan that Jesus met in the desert is the same as his followers also encountered.

It shouldn't surprise us then that there will be times when we too will encounter this being.

The question then is: when the devil comes to us, as he will, what does he do?

Tell the person next to you.

There are a multitude of ways he wants to interfere in our lives.

One of the main ways is found in our readings this morning.

So when Satan comes to us he wears three hats.

First, he comes to us as **Tempter**.

His aim is to tempt the believer to commit evil and wrong.
So he lures us with the forbidden.

He says, "Why don't you have a look at this?"
or "Hey have you thought about this?"
or "Why don't you give this a try?"
"No one will ever know."

So just over 15 years ago the Vatican did a survey and they found that for men and women the most common temptations were different.
For men it was the lure of the forbidden in the form of lust and gluttony.
For women it was the lure of the forbidden in the form of pride and envy.

We often imagine the forbidden as being only those things that are especially grievous.
The thing is, the forbidden isn't always something wrong in and of itself.

Often the forbidden is a good thing at the wrong time or in the wrong way.

Sex is a good thing, created by God for the intimacy of marriage between one man and one woman.
Outside of this it becomes warped and becomes other than what God intends.

It could be family. Families are good but we can give such excessive regard to our families that we can sacrifice some of our Lord's more costly commands.

A career and work are good things but they can quickly become places where we seek to find our significance and identity.

A Sydney merchant banker who worked very long hours was persuaded by his wife to take the day off work to spend some time with his teenage son David. David pined for his dad's attention, but was always too busy. Nevertheless, the banker took a day off and they spent a magical day sailing. Although never repeated, David stored it in his memory as the wonderful day he spent alone with his father.

A few years later the merchant banker died suddenly of a heart attack and David, now in his twenties, found his father's work diaries when going through his things. He opened one up to the date they went sailing. His father had written the words: 'Complete waste of a day.'¹

¹ Recounted by Clive Hamilton & Richard Denniss in *Affluenza* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 85.

The Devil wants to entice into sin.
He wants to lure us with the forbidden.
He knows it's toxic and that it destroys us.
He wants sin to take hold in our lives.

Temptation in itself isn't sin. Jesus was tempted, yet without sinning.

So then the devil comes to us a **Deceiver**.
He wants to deceive us about the forbidden.
He whispers into our ear, hearts and minds, and what does he say?

“You deserve the forbidden...”

“It doesn't really matter if you indulge in the forbidden...”

“No one will ever know about your involvement with the forbidden...”

“You've gone this far with the forbidden, so you might as well keep going...”

And if he can he wants to make us oblivious.

Some years ago a group of ministers for a time of mutual support and encouragement. Each of the pastors took time to share with the others the issues they were facing. One pastor in particular grabbed everyone else's attention. He began sharing about how his receptionist and wonderful she was. As he talked the others in the group began to get a bit on edge. Then he went on to say how she was sooo understanding of him. You could almost imagine their eyes getting wider and wider as this pastor talked about this receptionist who cared so much about his life. And he keep going on to say she was such a great listener. Finally someone spoke up and said you've got to cut ties with the receptionist. The others joined in and said, you know, regardless of how you do it, this has to end.

He could not see the danger before him; he was deceived.

So Satan comes to us tempting us with the forbidden; then he comes as a deceiver speaking deceitfully about the forbidden.

And then when we have taken the forbidden he comes to us the **Accuser** and as the accuser he condemns us for taking the forbidden.

He comes pointing the finger of condemnation.

The whisper becomes a howling torrent of indictment.

He tells us we're worthless, or filthy or disgusting or a failure.

He continues to hold before our eyes the way in which we have so stuffed up in our lives.

So what's the devil's goal in all of this?
Ever wondered that?

He want to create a division; he wants to create a divide between us and the one who loves us the most in the universe.

The devil's main and core objective is this: he seeks to draw or pull us away from God.

So that's the bad news.
So what's the good news in all of this?

Hebrews 2 verse 17:

“For this reason he had to be made like his brothers and sisters, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

That is so good, isn't it? Sooo good.
Jesus became like us, like you and me, fully human, to help us... in our temptation.

So the question is this:

“When the Tempter comes to us, how does Jesus help us?”

Have a chat about this to the person next to you.

Many people will say that when Jesus was tempted he showed us a template to follow.

In Matthew and Luke's Gospels Jesus resists temptation through the Word of God.

So He sets an example, yes!

He is our Exemplar.

As Peter talked about in the last 3 weeks, in Scripture and theology what you discover is that Jesus has what is called three offices – not places of work 😊 – but positions of authority and power.

The first is Prophet.

The second is Priest.

The third is He is King

Let me begin with **Priest**.

As Priest Jesus forgives, and he pardons and he cleanses and washes and makes us new.

He has taken our sin on Himself.

I mean, the God the Father so loved the world that He gave Jesus to us.

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

Hebrews tells us that he made atonement for our sins.

Jesus brings us before the Father and we experience the Father's embrace.

So when the Accuser comes, pointing the finger of condemnation and spouting the words that say we're worthless or filthy or disgusting or useless, we can go to Jesus.

And Jesus promises to make spotless and clean so that the Accuser is *silenced*.

1 John 1 verse 9?

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will... forgive us our sins and... purify us from all unrighteousness.”

[Not only that but through the gift of the Holy Spirit, we can experience life change and move closer towards perfection].

So Jesus helps us as Priest.

As **Prophet** Jesus gives moral guidelines for healthy living.

He is a brilliant teacher

He is communicator par excellence. There is no better.

And as Prophet, the one who speaks for God, Jesus always tells the truth. That is one of the reasons why, in the Protestant stream of faith, we have emphasised the role and place of Scripture alone.

That is one of the reasons for stressing the place of Biblical preaching.

It's one of the reasons we have accentuated contemplating and meditating on Scripture.

It's one of the reasons for why we have this old-fashioned practice of learning memory verses.

It's so when the Deceiver comes to us, to you and me, we can know truth from error, right from wrong, black and white, good and evil.

So Jesus, as Prophet, will always help us in temptation by speaking the truth to us.

Then we have Jesus in his third office as **King**.

As King is the world's true ruler.

He is all powerful and without evil.

Jesus is absolutely good and powerful and deserving our worship and adoration.

As the world's true King Jesus invites people to come under His good rule.

Under his rule He frees and transforms and liberates.

As King Jesus is the highest authority there is.

And one of the many things Jesus does as King is that he bestows authority on us.

Did you know that?

Turn with me to Luke chapter Luke chapter 10 verse 18 who is talking to His followers:

He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

I'm reminded of the story of new Christian who had been a gang member. He was asked to share his "before and after" story in a church. Afterwards there was a Q & A time, and so someone asked him, "How do you resist the temptation to return to your old way of life?"

With any forethought or embarrassment he replied, “I say, ‘Satan in the Name of Jesus, F--- off!!!’ ”

But he didn’t simply say the letter “F”, if you know what I mean.

I can just picture the scene:

Women fainting, children crying, jaws dropping and eyes wide with disbelief; and judgements starting to form.

That doesn’t give us the permission to do the same. Obviously he is a work in progress... like all of us.

But he knew where his authority lies.

So the point remains: when the Tempters comes to you, you can rebuke him, not because of anything you are, but in Jesus Name.

At other times Jesus will give you the ability to what? Flee.

So for you today, do you need to renew your relationship with Jesus as the faithful High Priest, the one who forgives and washes and makes you clean? He is the One who silences the voice of the accuser.

Or do you need to know Jesus as the Prophet who will always speak truth into your life through his Word so you won’t be deceived?

Or do you need to bend your knee and bow your heart in a fresh way before Jesus the King? It’s his authority that allows you rebuke and resist the evil one.