

(...and) **“...he was...led ...into the desert... to be tempted by the devil.”**

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, a young fellow by the name of Doug Alderson decided to take a little jaunt after school. Actually, it was a 2,000-mile jaunt down the Appalachian Trail! You see, Doug was a recent high school graduate and he had a lot of un-answered questions about himself and about life. Questions like:

Is there a God?

What is the purpose & meaning of life?

Why was he born & what is the purpose of his life?

Doug wrote:

**“There had to be more to life than money, TV, Facebook/Tweets, parties, and getting high...
My hike was a search for inner peace, a journey to... find myself.”**

The hike proved to be more difficult than Doug had anticipated. At times, the trail became dangerously steep. The days were often rainy. Doug’s clothes got soaked, his feet got wet, his body shivered and ached at night. **BUT**, he didn’t give up.

The long hours of walking and climbing gave Doug a chance to think. Particularly, they also gave him a chance to get to know himself better. There was no one around to influence him.

Five months later, Doug reached home. He was a different person. Even the dog eyed him strangely, as if to say,

“Where have you been and what have you done with my Douggy? You even look different!”

Doug WAS different. He had found what he was searching for: there WAS a God, life HAD a purpose, and he had a definite ROLE to play in it!

Doug summed up his experience this way:

“I was more my own person. I liked what I saw in myself.”

Doug Alderson belongs to that long line of people in history who have gone off alone to think about the meaning and purpose of life.

Moses did it. The prophets did it. John the Baptist did it. And, it in today’s Gospel, Jesus does it.

During his 40 days of being alone, Jesus experienced 3 great temptations. We might compare the 3 temptations to a preview of a movie. A preview tells us just enough about a movie to get us interested in it, **BUT** not enough to spoil the story for us.

The temptations of Jesus are like that. They tell us just enough about him to get us interested in him, **BUT** not enough to spoil the story for us ...the Gospel story, that is.

For example, the temptations give us a preview of who Jesus is and what he came to do.

I will just take the first point: who Jesus is.

The very first thing the temptations reveal is ...that Jesus experienced the very same, inner battle between good & evil that we do. He felt the very same, inner conflict that we feel between the rightness and the wrongness of our actions, which suggests that Jesus is as human as we are!

BUT, the temptation suggests something more.

Although Jesus was tempted as we are, he reacted to temptation differently than we do. Jesus didn’t waver, hesitate, or ‘dally’ in the face of temptation. He didn’t give in to the temptation. This suggests that there is something different or special about him—compared to us.

What, exactly, is that 'specialness?' you ask.

Well I am glad you asked that question!

To that answer, the devil himself gives us a clue, when he says to Jesus:

"If you are the Son of God..."

Clearly, the devil suggests that Jesus is not just another human being. He's God's Son come to live among us.

Years later, St. Paul would explain Jesus' nature this way,

'Jesus always had the nature of God, BUT he became like man & appeared in human form.' Phil 2:6-7

He had what theologians call the **'Hypostatic Union.'** So, the temptations preview the answer to the question, **"Who is Jesus?"** The answer: Jesus is **both** man AND God, simultaneously!

I will now take the 2nd point of the temptations-preview of Jesus: **what he came to do.**

To get to what Jesus came to do, we need to recall today's 1st reading: right after Adam was created, the devil tempted him, and Adam **'fell.'** From **that** moment on, every man, woman, & child has been affected, dare I say, 'infected' with sin. It became a part of our 'spiritual-DNA.'

Now, in today's gospel, the devil tempts Jesus. Where Adam 'fell,' Jesus 'stands firm.' This clearly suggests that Jesus came to free us from the 'infection' of sin. This clearly suggests that Jesus came to right the wrong of Adam's sin...to fix our 'spiritual DNA,' so to speak.

Commenting on Jesus' mission to do this, St. Paul says:

"As the one sin condemned all mankind, in the same way, the one righteous act of one man sets all mankind free ...and gives them life."

In other words, Jesus is the "2nd Adam," who has come to right the wrong of the "1st Adam!" That is exactly the way St. Paul explained Jesus' mission in his First Letter to the Corinthians:

**"Just as people die because of their union with Adam, in the same way, all will be raised to life because of their union with Christ....
The 1st Adam, made of earth, came from earth (dust); the 2nd Adam came from heaven....
Just as we wear the likeness of the man of earth,
so, we will wear the likeness of the man from heaven."** 1 Cor.15:22, 47-49

In other words, Jesus came to be the new Adam of a new human race.

So, to sum-up --Jesus' desert-temptations preview 2 important facts about Our Lord:

1st, he is the Son of God—become man.

2nd, he is the new Adam, whose mission is to freely restore life to all people, i.e. happiness/fulfillment.

I close with this prayer:

**Lord Jesus,
You are the Son of God-become-man.
You went into the desert to be tempted by the devil
and to begin your mission as the **new** Adam.
Help us enter into the desert with you.
Help us share in your Lenten battle that we may share, also,
in your Easter victory!**

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.