

We are now in the first Sunday of Lent when we begin to think about the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. The very purpose that Christ came into this world was in order to offer his life as a once and for all perfect sacrifice upon the cross in order to redeem human beings from sin. Sin entered into the human realm with the disobedience of Eve and Adam in the Garden of Eden and sin was dealt on the cross by the Lord Jesus Christ. The theme for our morning's meditation is. "The contrast between the failure of Adam and the obedience of Jesus, whose victory we are called to share."

In the Old Testament reading from the book of Genesis we notice that the Lord God had instructed Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when they eat from it, they would surely die. However, the serpent tempted them and lured Eve to eat of the fruit which was forbidden which she also shared with Adam. The result was a fourfold disaster in the human sphere. First of all doubts came between human beings and God as the evil one made them doubt God's goodness. In this the spiritual realm was affected between God and human beings because of their doubt. Secondly, it affected the intellectual realm because they began to rationalize what God had explicitly forbidden and admired the forbidden fruit convincing themselves that it would be good for food. It also affected the physical realm as there is the physical action of stretching out and taking the fruit and eating it. Finally, it affected the social realm as they shared the fruit with each other. The reality is that we live in a fallen world where sin has affected every sphere of our lives. The disobedience of one human being has led to sin spreading throughout the whole of humanity.

Adam is held responsible for the entering of sin into the human realm. Death entered the world through sin, both physical and spiritual as the penalty of disobedience. In contrast to Adam Christ died so that we may receive the free gift of grace. In Adam's case the judgement following disobedience led to condemnation but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification.

The difference between Adam and Christ lie in the nature of their two actions, their immediate results and their ultimate effect. In terms of their actions, the gift is not like the trespass. Adam's sin was indeed a fall, an imagery of a false step or a violation of moral standards. Adam deviated from the path which was shown to him. Adam's act was an act of self-assertion and disobedience. Christ's was on the other hand an act of self-sacrifice and obedience. Secondly, in terms of the immediate results, in the case of Adam, God's judgement brought condemnation and in the case of Christ, God's gift brought justification. Finally, in terms of their ultimate effect, Adam's disobedience brought death and Christ's obedience brought life.

In contrast to the disobedience of Adam and Eve we see the obedience of Christ. He was tempted in every way as we are and yet did not sin. Jesus was equally tempted and in fact much more than anybody else but did not sin. Immediately after his baptism Jesus was taken into the wilderness where he was tempted by Satan. Satan questions his Sonship and asks him to turn the stones into bread. Jesus counters him by saying that 'man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' Satan then takes him to the highest point of the temple and asks him to jump from there and do something spectacular so that the angels would save him. Again Jesus quotes scripture and tells him 'not to put the Lord to the test.' Finally, Satan asks him to worship him so that he will give all the kingdoms of the earth to him. Jesus again quotes scripture stating that worship is reserved for God alone and no one else. Jesus overcame temptation at every point.

The victory of Jesus over the powers of darkness gives us tremendous confidence that we may share in his victory. We too will be tempted in many ways to follow the inclinations of our sinful nature. However, because of Christ's victory on the cross over sin and death and also because of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives we can be more than conquerors. May God help us to share his victorious life.