

SERMON: BOTHERED BY BEASTS AND ASSISTED BY ANGELS

MARK 1:9-13

(9) And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. (10) And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him: (11) And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (12) And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness. (13) And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him.

Introduction

Mark's gospel is often referred to as the "action gospel." Mark was eager to show the Lord as a person of action. Thus, he was brief in recording the words of the Lord. Mark's gospel could also be described as minimalist, in that it is the shortest in length. Mark got straight to the point. He showed Jesus as a servant active in serving others. Yet Mark recorded incidents and aspects that the other writers did not include. This is true of the writing of the temptations of Jesus. Mark does not give a full account as do Matthew (4:1-11) and Luke (4:1-13), but Mark adds some vivid details that the others omit.

Let me quickly review the temptations. He was tempted to turn stones to bread. That was to use His power for His own selfish motives. If he had yielded, His first miracles would have been self-serving.

He was tempted to jump from the temple. To do something spectacular and risky that provided no benefit, just to get attention. He was tempted to bow down and worship satan and received all of the secular kingdoms. That was to give His allegiance to the devil and abandon the mission. More importantly, that was, to leave the Holy Trinity and become a duality with the devil. (Each one of these temptations can easily be the content for several sermons or several Bible lessons.)

Mark mentions that Jesus was among wild animals. These were not rabbits, squirrels or chipmunks. These were vicious predators, like lions, hyenas, bears, slithering snakes, and scary scorpions. Not only did Jesus have to contend with loneliness, hunger, and enticement, but also the physical danger from fierce animals.

In this narrative is a picture of the paradox of life in our existential, fallen state. There were dangerous animals, but also attending angels. There is good and there is bad. There is health and there is sickness. We move from festivals to funerals and back again. The days are long, but the years are short. It has been said that life is a melody, but a portion of it is out of tune. Through it all God is with His children and we can be

assured of victory. Let's quickly look at a few thoughts that spring from this Scripture and then celebrate Holy Communion.

Exposition

1. You Will Be Tested-That's A Certainty.

(A Test Affirms Your Qualifications.)

(A Test Precedes Promotion to the Next Level.)

2. Many Times The Test Will Come After A High Point In Your Life.

(Immediately After The Baptism He Was Driven Into The Wilderness.)

3. The Test May Be Longer Than The High Point.

(A Few Minutes In The Jordan-Forty Days In The Wilderness.)

4. There Are Beasts And There Are Angels.

(There Are Many Kinds Of Beasts.)

(There Are Many Kinds Of Angels.)

(That's Life In Our Fallen, Real World.)

(There Are Hindrances And There Are Helpers.)

(Sometimes We See The Beasts And Not The Angels.)

(Sometimes We See The Angels And Not The Beast.)

(We Have To See Both And Put Them In Perspective.)

5. Sometimes The Beasts Growl, And Howl Louder Than The Angels.

(Sometimes We May Wonder If The Beasts Outnumber The Angels.)

6. Sometimes We Can Confuse The Beast With The Angels.

(2nd Corinthians 11:14.)

7. Jesus Went Through All Of This To Qualify To Become Our Savior.

(Through It All He Was Victorious And Sinless.)

(He Was/Is The Sinless Lamb Provided By God.)

(If He Had Failed, We Would Not Be Celebrating Communion Today.)

Closing Thoughts

The first Adam was tested in a beautiful Garden and failed. Jesus the last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45) was tempted in a dangerous wilderness and won the victory. Jesus was with the wild beasts and they did not harm Him. He gave a demonstration of the future time of peace and righteousness, when the Lord shall return and establish His kingdom.

So, as we celebrate Holy Communion, please take courage. Be not afraid of the beasts. Jesus has set the example. The beasts can be subdued. Angels are here to assist. Be of good courage! Hallelujah comes after hardships and Resurrection Sunday comes after Good Friday. Give God Glory! Give God All the Glory.

End Note

The reference to Jesus being “with the wild beasts” has given rise to two radically different interpretations. Some believe that the wild animals lived peaceably with Jesus from His initial entry into the wilderness. They were His companions and acted like pets. This is like the movie *Dances With Wolves*. The more traditional approach, which I take, is that the wild beasts were Jesus’ enemies. Throughout the forty days they threaten to destroy Him. On this interpretation, Jesus is victorious over the wild beast just as Daniel was victorious in the lions’ den. The lions were not Daniels pets; supernatural powers kept them from eating Daniel. Some believe the angels kept the beasts at bay for the forty days Jesus was in the wilderness. Any way you look at it, Jesus was victorious and remained sinless and qualified to become our Savior.

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