

# Christ Empowers to Overcome - 1st Sunday of Lent

by Michael Flowers

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of reappropriating baptismal covenant and living a life of faith, putting off the old nature and putting on the new nature, as believers prepare for Lent and Easter.*

**Duration:** 26:15

**Topics:** "Overcoming"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and our Lord. He highlights the key events in Jesus' life, including His conception by the Holy Spirit, birth from the Virgin Mary, suffering under Pontius Pilate, crucifixion, death, burial, descent to the dead, resurrection on the third day, and ascension into heaven. The preacher also mentions the belief in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. He encourages the congregation to continue in the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers, as well as to repent and return to the Lord whenever they fall into sin.

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## Transcript

Lord, we thank you for this glorious day as we lean into the gospel story, as we follow Christ out of his baptism into the wilderness to be tempted and to overcome the enemy. Thank you that you were standing in our place, not only on the cross, but you were standing in our place in the wilderness as well. And through you, Jesus Christ, we pray that you would send your spirit today and reveal to us those special keys that we need to hear to continue to overcome in this world of wilderness wanderings until we see you face to face in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen. For some of us, this is our favorite time of year. Right, Lynn? Every Lent, I would hear it.

I love I love Lent. I'd never heard that before. But since these days of our beginning, we've come to really, really love this season of time.

It's a rich time. Well, let's contemplate just a little bit about this season and then we'll move into the baptisms this morning. And so it's that time where even baseball is actually going into spring training and they, too, are going back to the basics.

Right. You have these world class athletes that, you know, have swung a ball and done all their plays, you know, thousands of times, and yet they go back and they pull back for this spring time training and they go back to the very fundamentals of baseball, how to throw a baseball, how to baseball. And in a sense, that's an analogy for what we're doing in Lent.

We go right back to the fundamentals of our faith, the fundamental practices of our faith that keep us aligned in him, that our communication with God in prayer, our not being overly indulgent with food, perhaps, and actually becoming more generous. It's an intensified season of time for this so that we can reflect on where we have fallen short, perhaps, or where we've gotten a bit lazy in our faith. I know it's always that possibility for us to just slow down and not become mindful of how things have become.

And so this is a time of reflection for us. Every Lent, it always portrays Jesus going off into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil for 40 days. Jesus is representative Israel in this regard, because he is the true vine and he's retracing the steps of Israel, redeeming all of those places where Israel failed.

He's, in a sense, standing in Israel's place as he stands in our place and he reenacts the whole history of Israel in those 40 days, those 40 years in the wilderness where their hearts grew hard. Today, if you will hear my voice harden, not your hearts. We've been reflecting on that from time to time over this past month, but it's an odd pairing, isn't it? If you will hear my voice, harden not your heart.

Why would our hearts be hardened when we hear his voice? Because God sometimes says things we don't want to hear, because God sometimes says things that our culture doesn't want to hear, because God calls us to live in ways that sometimes might be embarrassing, that we may feel a little shy about standing on certain things. And so today, if we hear his voice, we want to go into this period of Lent where we're struggling, perhaps, with what God has said. Because Jesus is going into the wilderness and he's being confronted by the enemy and everything that comes forth from Jesus is written.

It is written. It is written. He's in alignment with the will of God in that sense, because he is the word made flesh.

He's very familiar with the scriptures because he inspired them. And so here we are. We're going into the wilderness, but thank God for the reading today.

We're going to back up and contemplate what preceded going into the wilderness. It's the baptism of Jesus. It's a model for all of us.

You guys, this baptism is. And in fact, I think that as we contemplate the steps in his baptism and what Jesus experienced and we appropriate what Jesus experienced, we'll have a very, very rich time in Lent as we encounter the trials and the temptations before us. You see, before Jesus stepped into the wilderness, he stepped into the waters of the Jordan.

Those are sacramental waters when Jesus steps into those waters and in these two movements, stepping into the wilderness and stepping into the waters of the Jordan, there are two voices, the voice from the heavens saying, this is my beloved son. And then he goes into the wilderness and he hears another voice, the voice of Satan, the voice of the enemy. And he was prepared to hear that voice because the heavens were torn apart and he was anointed by the Holy Spirit and he heard the voice of the father and he was appropriating all of that in the wilderness.

And so I want to call all of us to appropriate this experience in the baptism of Jesus as we enter into the 40 days of prayer, fasting and almsgiving and other disciplines you may be taking up. Now, that voice of Satan is going to contend with the very identity that was given to Jesus on that day. Now, Jesus didn't become the son of God in his baptism.

That would be adoptionism. That's a heresy. But the father speaks the word of sonship to Jesus, the eternal son, who has always been the son.

There never was a time where the son wasn't the son. He's being affirmed like all fathers do with their children, with their sons and with their daughters. He's saying, you are my beloved and whom I'm well pleased.

That is a word that is often covered over, right, with all types of experiences and emotions, family rearing and how you relate to your father. It can be a hard thing to get in touch with the affirmation of ABBA because that voice was not only for Jesus, it's for us. And Paul tells us that the spirit of adoption is crying inside of us.

Those who have been baptized and have come into relationship with God, the spirit of adoption is crying ABBA father at all times. And so Jesus is hearing this voice and he's seeing, as it were, the heavens tear open. Now, I'm not thinking Mark is trying to tell us that actually holes came in the sky.

I don't think that's really what it's trying to communicate. I think when the heavens were open, that is the realm of God, that unseen realm that had been separated. We've been separated from right.

This is not a literalistic reading. This is something far deeper. The heavens opened at the baptism of Jesus, the second Adam taking our place and calling us to be in him as beloved children, as beloved sons and daughters.

And so the heavens are torn open again, as it were, where there is now no more barrier between us and ABBA. He's taken away the separation. He's taking away the alienation through Jesus.

And as we live our lives in Jesus, not in of ourselves, we have that same intimacy. Jesus is the heir. He has everything that the father has.

But guess what? We're co-heirs in Jesus Christ. We have everything that the father has because we're in the air. Jesus Christ, we're co-heirs.

And so these are things that we have to remember when we go into the wilderness, when we step out of this liturgy this morning and we go back into the world where the lust of the flesh and the boastful pride of life and all of the rest, you know, the voice of the enemy is speaking, tempting, coming against us, trying to deceive us, the father of lies. So we must remember that Christ went before us and overcame those lies and it was coming out of his baptism that he was able to do that. What happened? He not only heard the voice from the father, but he received the anointing, the spirit of adoption, the spirit of God came upon him to do ministry.

No, no miracles were ever done until Jesus stepped out of the waters of the Jordan and began his ministry. Why? Because he was anointed. He was coronated in a sense as the king, the Messiah, the Christ.

He emptied himself by becoming a human being. And so he needed the power of the Holy Spirit and the voice of the father. And so now we have the revelation of the Trinity, the father and the son and the Holy Spirit all working in this second Adam, you see, bringing salvation to us.

And so those heavens tear open in the father's voice comes and the spirit anoints us and he empowers us in this way through our baptism and our reappropriation of our baptism. To overcome as well, this is how we entered Lent, you see, coming out of the baptismal appropriation of Christ. And actually, today we're going to reappropriate our baptismal covenant within the liturgy of the baptism.

So we're all going to reappropriate the power of this baptism today and we're going to enter Lent the way Christ entered the desert, newly empowered by the Holy Spirit. Newly affirmed, I'm loved of God that settles it. No other voice will contend.

God loves me. He does. He loves me.

And I say that with kind of forceful passion, because there's so many voices speaking against the love of God for you. Yeah, and they can be the voice of judgment in our own flesh, the inability to accept and receive that love. And so by the grace of God, receive the love of the father and the grace of Jesus and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit today.

That's why we gather to receive more and more of these things that we all struggle with. We all struggle, the fight of faith, Paul calls it, it's the fight of faith. We have to fight for certain things to appropriate what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

They're given to us, but we have to receive them and sometimes we have to fight to receive them because of the doubt and the unbelief and the other voices contending because of the collision of kingdoms that we're up against. The kingdom of God suffers violence, Jesus said, and the violent ones play hold of it. I'm calling us to do spiritual violence.

It's a different kind of violence that resisting the enemy and he will flee from you kind of violence. It's that resistance that's doing violence to the kingdom of darkness. It is written is doing violence to the kingdom of darkness.

You got to put your armor on, take up the sword of the spirit and the word of God, the shield of faith, the boots of the gospel of peace. There's two options. There's two voices.

Which voice are you going to believe? Which voice will you walk in as beloved children or as has God said, you're really a son and a daughter. We all know that voice, and I pray that the father's voice will become louder and louder. Now, this is how we enter Lent, but you can mark this day.

This is how Kate and Jane are going to enter Lent today. They're going to enter Lent through the affirmation of the father and the feeling of the Holy Spirit, and they will remember every Lent the first Sunday of Lent. They will remember this because you're going to tell them every year the story of their baptism.

They'll see countless others do this until they learn to appropriate what you have been giving them as mom and dad, the household of faith. You are giving your children the faith. The faith is passed on from one generation to the next.

Baptism for us is not some sort of powerless symbol. It's a powerful sacrament. Unless you're born of water and the spirit, you can't enter the kingdom of God.

Baptism is not a one off event. Baptism is efficacious for the rest of your life. It's an ongoing efficacious grace that's received here that must be reaffirmed, reappropriated every day.

It's a putting off and a putting on. That's baptismal language in Paul. Put off the old man and put on the new man.

Put off the old self, put on the new self. That's what happens in baptism. And we share we participate in the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ in this baptism.

We participate. We fellowship in the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But that's not only a one off event.

That's an everyday take up my cross and follow me. And so in that taking up of our cross to follow Jesus, we are putting off the old nature and putting on the new nature. We must become tireless at this.

Sometimes we get tired. We get tired of putting off and putting on. Right.

We get tired of undressing and dressing and undressing and dressing. That's what it's all about. Right.

Paul is saying, get undressed, but put Jesus on, get undressed, but put Jesus on. And that is the baptismal life. That's the power of what we're doing today.

Amen. All right. And this is how we're all going to enter the Lent.

I almost said the A word, right? It's one of those Western traditions that we don't say the A word during Lent. Well, let's do this. Scripture teaches that we were all dead in our sins and trespasses.

Our Savior, Jesus Christ said, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. And he commissioned the church to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we ask our heavenly Father that these candidates being baptized with water may be filled with the Holy Spirit, become new creation and received as living members of Christ's holy church.

The candidates for holy baptism will now be presented. I'll have all of you participating today. Come forward.

Will you be responsible for seeing that Kate and Jane are brought up in the Christian faith in life? Will you buy your prayers and witness, help these children to grow into the full stature of Christ? Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God? Do you renounce the evil powers of this world, which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God? Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God? Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your savior? Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love? You promise to follow and obey him as your Lord. Congregation, will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support Kate and Jane and their lives in Christ? Let us join this family who are committing themselves to Christ and renew our own baptismal covenant. Father Less, come and lead us in this as we stand.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

I will with God's help. I will with God's help. I will with God's help.

I will with God's help. I will with God's help. Amen.

Let us now pray for Kate and Jane, who are to receive the sacrament of new birth by water and the Holy Spirit. Deliver them, O Lord, from the way of sin and death. Lord, hear our prayer.

Open their hearts to your grace and truth. Lord, hear our prayer. Fill them with your holy and life-giving Spirit.

Lord, hear our prayer. Keep them in the faith and communion of your holy church. Lord, hear our prayer.

Teach them to love others in the power of the Spirit. Lord, hear our prayer. Send them into the world in witness to your love.

Lord, hear our prayer. Bring them to the fullness of your peace and glory. Lord, hear our prayer.

Grant, O Lord, that all who are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ, your Son, may live in the power of his resurrection and look for him to come again in glory, who lives and reigns with you now and forever. Amen. The Lord be with you.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water. Over it, the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation.

Through it, you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In it, your Son, Jesus, received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us through his death and resurrection from the bondage of sin into everlasting life. We thank you, Father, for the water of baptism.

In it, we were buried with Christ in his death. By it, we share in his resurrection. Through it, we are reborn by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, in joyful obedience to your Son, we bring into this fellowship those who come to him in faith, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Sanctify this water, we pray you, by the power of your Holy Spirit, that those who here are cleansed from sin and are born again may continue forever in the risen life of Jesus Christ, our Savior. To him, to you and to the Holy Spirit be all honor and glory now and forever.

Amen. Kate, I baptize you in the name of the Father and in the name of the Son and in the name of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Jane, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son. It feels good, doesn't it? And of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Father Les is going to come and anoint you with oil and pray a prayer. Amen. Come, Holy Spirit, upon Kate and Jane, and empower them as witnesses of Christ's presence in the world for all your gifts.

Amen. Jessica will light the candles now and present them to someone who can hold them, actually. Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water in the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon Kate and Jane, your children, the forgiveness of sin and have raised them to the new life of grace.

Sustain them, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere a spirit to know and to love you in the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. Amen.

Let us welcome Kate and Jane, the newly baptized. Amen. It's great.

Let's pray together. We receive you into the household of God, confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in his eternal priesthood. Amen.

May the peace of the Lord be always with you. Let's share that peace this morning with one another.

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