

*We bow our hearts in prayer: Our heavenly Father, **Lead us not into temptation.** Guard and keep us so that the devil, the world and our own flesh may not deceive us nor lead us into misbelief, despair and other shameful sin and vice; and though we be thus tempted, grant that we may still in the end overcome and retain the victory. Amen.*

Dear Fellow Redeemed, Beware of the temptation to pride.

Of all the sins that bedevil man, pride is the original and the chief.

We heard, once again, in the OT Lesson how it was the mankind fell into sin:
the devil tempted Eve to pride.

Who was her husband to forbid even to touch such a pleasant looking fruit?

Who was God to forbid them from gaining the 'wisdom' of the knowledge of evil?

Now, I don't think that she had such evil, rebellious thoughts or intentions
as she reached for the forbidden fruit, but that was the meaning of her actions.

The devil had painted her sin in such innocent colors,

after all, it was just another fruit... and he promised they wouldn't really die...

In today's text, the disciples could also have easily fallen into the sin of pride,
but our Lord Jesus, pointed them back ever so gently to His grace,
in which there is no room for pride.

Our text for meditation today is...

We read as follows in Jesus' name:

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name!" And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." ^(ESV)

*These are Your Words, heavenly Father; **sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth.** Amen* ^(John 17:17)

Jesus had recently sent these 72 disciples out into the villages He was about to enter.

They were to announce Jesus' coming, telling them the **kingdom of God was near.**

Jesus gave them authority to heal the sick as proof that their message was from God.

Imagine their surprise when, as they went out & healed, even demons obeyed them.

When had this been done before: that the powerful evil spirits obeyed weak mortals?

Up until that time the demons had not obeyed them! Now something was different!

And by God's grace, the disciples understood what that difference was.

It wasn't that they were now more spiritual and so, more spiritually powerful.

It was, as they acknowledged, that the demons had to submit to Jesus' name.

As the disciples returned with joy, Jesus rejoiced with them, but not in what they rejoiced.

Their joy was in their ability to use God's power over the demons,

but His joy was in Satan's fall from heaven and man's being exalted to heaven.

He rejoiced that by His suffering and death and His resurrection and ascension,

Satan, our 'Accuser,' no longer has a place in heaven from which to accuse you before God.

We are right to pray for Jesus' help in the Litany ...*By Your Baptism, Fasting and Temptation;*

By Your Agony and Bloody Sweat; By Your Cross and Passion;

By Your Precious Death and Burial...^{ELHp.137}

For it was in part by these righteous acts of His that the devil has lost his power over you.

Your Baptismal connection to Jesus' death and resurrection is to comfort you through the difficult times in this sin-corrupted life.

Many of our Lutheran hymns declare this comfort in such defiant tones:

Satan, hear this proclamation, I am baptized into Christ!

Drop your ugly accusation, I am not so soon enticed.

Now that to the font I've traveled, All your might has come unraveled.^(ELH #246)

And Luther's *A Mighty Fortress*:

Though devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us.

We tremble not, we fear no ill, They shall not overpower us.

This world's prince may still scowl fierce as he will,

He can harm us none, He's judged; the deed is done; One little word can fell him.^(ELH #250)

With such hymns, we defy the devil's attempt to claim us.

But Dear Fellow Redeemed, beware of the temptation to pride.

Satan can just as easily turn your defying into contempt for him.

He can play dead and beaten, all the while luring you into spiritual complacency.

He would just as soon stop accusing you, if it led to pride and self-security.

As Luther recognized, *Deep guile and great might, Are his dread arms in fight.*

Sometimes the devil does wield his *great might* in this world to scare you.

He would have you fear suffering... or loss of reputation... or death... in this world.

But more often, he prefers the more subtle *guile* and *deception*, as he did with Eve.

He *deceived* Eve saying she would **not surely die** and led her to disbelieve God, which really was pride... that she now had a better knowledge than God of what would and would not happen.

Such pride is not far from each one of us.

I'm sure you don't sit there thinking, "I don't believe the Bible,"

but if you doubt the pastor's pronouncement of forgiveness by the authority of God, even though Jesus said in the Bible, "**If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven,**"

then you doubt the Bible and God's Word, just as Eve did.

But the devil's temptations to the pride of *misbelief* can be just as dangerous to your faith, such as when you misbelieve that God still requires something of you for salvation, whether a decision to accept Him or works of satisfaction for your sins.

Sometimes Satan uses *the sweetest frames* of our loved ones, as he did with Adam,^{ELH #197} who trusted Eve's enticement rather than God's Word.

The *world* is full of the seductions to *shameful sin and vice*,

even making shameful perversions to God's gift of marriage legal, even preferred.

But lest you be tempted to pride, thinking that you are immune to such sins,

consider how divorce, infidelity, pornography, lust, *unchaste* thoughts,

indecent words and *deeds*, lovelessness and *dishonor* toward one's spouse

or the opposite sex, are all confessed to and forgiven within the Church.

Nor is this only among the young people, but even the middle aged and elderly.

Being successful in various temptations, the devil is delighted to accuse your conscience; happy to exacerbate the sad consequences and the suffering your sin has caused ^{2Corinth.7:10} and to jettison you way past **godly grief producing a repentance that leads to salvation**, directly into hopelessness and *despair* of God's love and forgiveness.

...

But Jesus would keep you from temptation to pride, as He did with His disciples. "Nevertheless," He said, "**do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.**" Your strength against the devil and his demonic angels is not in or of yourself. Your ability to resist the temptations of the evil one is always and only from God.

Notice that **your name is written in heaven** for you, not by you.

It is written there in the Blood of the Son of God, shed for you and your salvation.

In Isaiah He confirms, **Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.** ^{Isaiah49:16}

The wounds that Thomas, in disbelief, proudly demanded so irreverently to probe, are the permanent marks of your name written in His eternal flesh in heaven.

In Jesus' flesh that **serpent of old** has tried his worst, ^{Revelation12:9} but all he could do was sink his deadly venom into Jesus' heal as it crushed his head, ^{Genesis 3:15} treading over Him with complete righteousness through all temptations.

Jesus is your only answer to the temptations and falls into pride and all resulting sins, Not His example of how to defeat the devil's temptations (though we should learn from it), But His having defeated the temptations for you. As Satan attacked Jesus, he was attacking you as well. And so when Jesus defeated the devil, the devil was defeated for you as well. Jesus did not do it with arrogance or disdain at the devil's attempts but humble trust in God's Word as the only source and knowledge of God's will and truth.

In this sinful flesh, you will *be thus tempted*, to pride and all evil, especially after you have been united with Christ through Baptism. But in answer to your prayers, God grants you the ability to *overcome in the end*, in Jesus' name, for where Jesus' name is correctly preached and administered, Satan must flee.

This means that you have the antidote to Satan's poisonous accusations.

It is God's never failing Word, "Your pride is forgiven, in Jesus' name."

It is your Baptism, for you who have been baptized, were baptized into Christ's death; you were buried and you now live spiritually and eternally with Him. ^{Romans6:3-4}

It is in His Holy Communion with you, where you receive the body and the blood of Jesus, pierced, crushed, dead and buried, and yet risen to life again.

Of this fruit, so pure and sweet, the Lord invites the world to eat... and live. ^{ELH #304}

So continue to sing our devil-defying Lutheran hymns, but remember why it is that you can: *For against Satan's tyranny, God your Lord unites with thee.*

And *that little word that fells* the devil and his demons, is the little yet mighty name of Jesus!

Thanks be to God, who has given you the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ^{1Cor15:57}

Soli Deo Gloria