

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Good Friday
April 3, 2026
Sermon by Pastor Gary A. Pufahl
Jesus is our high priest.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest, who has gone through the heavens, namely, Jesus the Son of God, let us continue to hold on to our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin. ¹⁶So let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. ^{5:7}In the days of his flesh, he offered prayers and pleas with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸Although he was the Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered. ⁹After he was brought to his goal, he became the source of eternal salvation for everyone who obeys him.

—Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

The lines are drawn. The two forces face each other. 1v1. It's you against the devil. You can't see your enemy with your eyes, but you know he's there. You can't grab him with your hands, but you know his attacks. Every step you take is calculated by your enemy. He watches for patterns, habits, weaknesses. All he has to do is get you to walk away from God. Turn your back on him. Rebel against him. Deny him. So, your enemy goes on the offensive. He puts traps in your path. They are called temptations. Something that's alluring. Something that will lead you away from God. Something that will cause you to go against God's will. He knows how to tempt you to fall.

God knows this, too. So he promised an out. God promised a hope. He promised a Way. He made it known all through the Old Testament Scriptures. Someone was coming who would step in between the sinner and God. Someone was coming who would take the guilt away from the sinner and on to himself. God pictured this, showed this to his people in the Old Testament. The priests were the go-betweens. The priests were set up by God to step in between God and the people. The priests were the mediators.

But you can imagine what happened when the priest sinned. Satan laughed. He got another one. Trace the priesthood throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. Not one of them was perfect. Not a one. One priest after the other was rebellious. They needed to offer sacrifices. First for their own sins, then for the sins of the people. Some priests were so immoral. They rebelled against God with regularity. Temptations galore. So, Satan, the enemy, laughs. "Ha! These are the mediators. These are the ones who are God's representatives. These are the ones who are to hold out forgiveness to people." He laughs. For centuries he laughs. He mocks God. He ridicules God. The enemy looks at the world and for centuries sees how easy it can be to attack on the battlefield.

But then it happens. God keeps his promise. He sends his Son, "**born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law**" (Galatians 4:4,5). God sets Jesus aside for his mission. It happened in the waters of the Jordan River. Jesus was baptized by John. The Spirit descended on him in the form of a dove. The Father boomed, "**This is my Son whom I love. With him I am well-pleased**" (Matthew 3:17). Jesus comes up out of the water. And the first thing that happens, the very first place the Holy Spirit leads Jesus is ... into the desert.

This is the battlefield. This is the place where lines will be drawn. The enemies stand face to face. 1v1. Jesus versus Satan. By the looks of it, Satan must have been chuckling. Too easy. 40 days of no food. Jesus is weak. He's worn out. Famished. This will be a piece of cake. Did he laugh to himself again and again? Another one who will fall. Perhaps. Likely.

But every time he went with a temptation, Jesus never gave in. Does Jesus know temptation? He lived temptation. Every step he took was a temptation. Satan made sure of it. God allowed it. It wasn't just three temptations; it was a constant life of Satan looking for an opportunity to cause the Son of God to fail. But God promised he would not let his people be tempted beyond what they can bear. He promised that. Jesus is the Son of God. What can he bear? Oh, he can bear it all. So God allowed Satan to put before him all temptations. Not a single one was left out. Greed? Lying? Cheating? Lust? Selfishness? You name it, Satan played it ... and lost every single time. He lost every single time.

But understand this, my friends, Jesus wasn't battling for himself. He faced every single temptation imaginable, and resisted every single temptation imaginable, for you. For you! And the ultimate battle scene happened on this day, on Good Friday. The lines were drawn. Satan gave his best and final attempts to tempt Jesus to throw in the towel. "Curse God and die." But not one word, not one thought of doing that ever crossed Jesus' mind. Rather he prays words like "**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing**" (Luke 23:34). He was constantly focused on others. To the thief who looked to him in faith, Jesus said, "**Amen I tell you: Today you will be with**

me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). As he looked down from the cross, he saw his dear mother and his heart went out to her. He looks at Mary and his friend John and says, "**Woman, here is your son! Here is your mother!**" (John 19:26,27). He was thinking about and praying for other people. And what did it get him? Well, your sin and my sin. He was made sin in our place. The priest became the sacrifice. It got him abandonment. Separation. Loneliness. Hell. Even the sun stopped shining as it recognized the deepest sorrow that Jesus was experiencing. He experienced hell, separation from God, and cried, "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**" (Matthew 27:46). His heart was broken, metaphorically and literally. As his heart begins to die, he cries for a comfort so no one can miss his last few moments in this world. "**I thirst**" (John 19:28). **When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished!"** (John 19:30). Everything was complete. He had done everything to crush Satan's head and win the victory. Those are words of victory, not defeat. As the man on the cross looks defeated, he calls out the victory. "**It is finished!**" There was only one thing left to do. Have perfect faith in his Father at death. **Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" When he had said this, he breathed his last.** (Luke 23:46).

Jesus is your high priest who stood between you and God and perfectly fulfilled all of God's requirements for eternal life. And Satan knows that!

My friends, what is Satan holding over you right now? Have you fallen into temptation? Did you give in to those rebellious desires? Not according to God. Jesus has nailed them to the cross. So what does this mean? Satan's done! He's defeated. Oh, you are on the battlefield. And Satan hates you. He hates you. Your enemy hates so much. He's miserable. But he's not laughing anymore. Jesus defeated him. He's miserable. The only thing he wants is to bring misery to you. He wants you to suffer with him. But he's done. He's defeated. Do temptations come your way? Of course. Because Satan wants you to be miserable. Do you have to give in to those temptations? Never. God will not allow something to come to you beyond what you can bear. And Jesus has given you power. Jesus has freed you from those sinful desires.

You now have the power to turn off the TV, to speak the truth, to love someone who hurt you, to be generous with your possessions. How do I know? How do you know? Because Jesus is your high priest. Jesus came to do what no other priest could. He came to defeat Satan. And he says to you, "Come to me. Pray to me. I will give you the grace and mercy and the help that you need when the enemy strikes."

Do I know this true? Do you know it's true? Are you forgiven? Can you live as God's child? Can you say "No" to all those temptations? Look again to the words from Hebrews 4 and 5. Jesus is your high priest! Amen.