

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison

Lesson: Luke 4:1-13

***4** Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, **2** where for forty days he was tempted^[a] by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. **3** The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." **4** Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'^[b]" **5** The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. **6** And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. **7** If you worship me, it will all be yours." **8** Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'^[c]" **9** The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. **10** For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; **11** they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'^[d]" **12** Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'^[e]" **13** When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.*

(Slide 1) Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison.

These two phrases are prayers asking for God's mercy and forgiveness. They come from Greek: *Kyrie* means "Lord," and *eleison* means "have mercy." *Christe* means "Christ," and again, *eleison* means "have mercy." So, these two phrases translate to "Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy."

As Lent begins, we enter a season where we reflect on the life and love of Jesus, who suffered and died on the cross in our place. During these 40 days, we look back on our relationship with God, pray, and meditate. What we should seek from God in this time is humility, forgiveness, and mercy.

On Wednesday evening, we gathered with some church members at Faith Family Church for a Soup Supper, followed by a meaningful Ash Wednesday Service to mark the start of Lent. That day, when I explained the beginning of

Lent, I used the example of buttoning a shirt. I said that Ash Wednesday is like the first button of Lent, and just as it's important to get the first button of a shirt right, this beginning matters. I remember how we encouraged one another that day, all of us so glad to be together, warmly welcoming everyone who joined us.

(Slide 2) Then, from the drive home after the service that night, through the next day, and perhaps even until Friday, I found myself immersed in thoughts about buttoning a shirt correctly. My question was this: "What does it mean to button a shirt right?" Sounds a bit strange, doesn't it? A shirt is just a shirt, and a button is just a button—some of you might wonder why I kept dwelling on this, and maybe you can't quite understand it.

To me, God's Word is alive, like manna. The manna we eat every day, the Word we take in daily—it's not the same manna each time. It comes to us a little differently each day, with a different taste. As I pondered this, my question shifted slightly: "Have we ever buttoned our shirts correctly?" I still couldn't shake this image of shirts and buttons, but do you see the difference in my questions?

(Slide 3) In Genesis, we see that God created us in His image. Back then, we were incredibly beautiful and happy. God trusted us so much that He entrusted us with naming and ruling over everything in the garden—everything except that one tree in the middle of the garden. But not long after, we ate the fruit from the very tree God told us not to touch. That's when a crack formed in our relationship with God. We had put the first button of our relationship with Him into the wrong hole. As a result, we could no longer live with God in that garden.

Yet God loved us so much and was so concerned for us as we faced life in an unfamiliar place that He personally made leather garments and clothed us with them. Time passed, but our situation didn't improve much. With that first button sewn in the wrong place, all the buttons that followed kept getting misaligned too. God gave us the Law, sent us kings, and dispatched numerous prophets so that our buttons could find their proper places. But since that first button was already in the wrong spot, no matter how many good things God

gave us, we couldn't, by our own strength, set those misbuttoned pieces back where they belonged.

Friends, what do we do? If this keeps up, all the buttons on our shirts might stay misaligned, and someone could see our exposed belly and laugh out loud.

No matter how much time passed or how many good things we had, we couldn't undo those misbuttoned pieces on our own. All we could do was cry out and pray, "Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison," pleading for God's mercy alone. So, in the end, God decided to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to us. Jesus came to our side and kept explaining why He had come. And just as He said, He unbuttoned each of our misaligned buttons one by one. Through His flesh and blood, He even undid that first button we could never loosen ourselves and fastened all the buttons back in their rightful places.

Through Jesus Christ, our buttons found their proper places, and through Him, our relationship with God—something we could hardly restore on our own—was restored.

Friends, during this Lenten season, I hope we will all lift up the prayer of "Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison" to God. Ash Wednesday was the first button of Lent, and it should never be taken lightly. But if you couldn't keep that service, don't worry too much. God is merciful and gracious, and we still have opportunities ahead. In those moments, we can come to God with humble hearts, seeking His mercy and forgiveness. What God desires most from us is that we lay everything down and return to Him in humility.

When we approach God with humble hearts, praying and seeking forgiveness, He will set our misbuttoned pieces back in place. He will calm the bitterness, worries, and anxieties within us, filling us with peace and joy, making us whole.

(Slide 4) Jesus, too, fasted and prayed for 40 days in the wilderness. During that time, He faced three temptations from Satan. The first was about material desires. After fasting for 40 days, He was incredibly hungry, but He overcame that temptation by prioritizing God's Word. The second was about power and glory. It seems people often turn their attention to gaining respect and honor

in society once their basic needs are met. Yet Jesus didn't kneel before all the wealth and power of the world; He worshipped and served God alone, overcoming the second temptation. The third was about trust in God. But once again, Jesus trusted God in every situation, at all times, and triumphed over the third temptation too.

Friends, Jesus came to this earth, fasted and prayed for 40 days, and in deep fellowship with God, prepared for His journey to save us, submitting to God's will. Even Jesus prepared to follow God's will through prayer. So how should we, who follow Him, spend this Lent, dear friends?

Just as Jesus faced trials, we too might encounter various temptations during this season of Lent—or throughout our journey of faith—as we trust and follow God. Temptations and Satan represent anything that disrupts our relationship with God. Satan and temptations use all sorts of methods to keep pushing our shirt buttons into the wrong holes.

When it feels like money and success are everything in our lives, remember what Jesus quoted: "Man shall not live on bread alone." When you feel small and insignificant, recall that the most important thing isn't people's recognition or respect but the truth that God is by your side, protecting you and loving you. And in any situation, at any moment, never doubt God's love for us.

The journey of faith is undoubtedly not an easy one. That's why, during this season, I pray that you will move forward praying, armed with prayer, and in every moment of your life, lifting up "Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison" in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.