

Refuge City Church — January 28, 2024
Gospel of Matthew: “Truth over lies” (Matthew 4:1-11)

Introduction

- *Last time:* We looked at the baptism of Jesus, as He stepped into a position to identify with us, those He came to save.
- *Today:* In His next steps, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, Jesus goes through an intense days in the wilderness leading up to the start of His ministry.

{verses 1-2}

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.”

- Jesus was led by the Spirit into where?? To do what??
 - The more accurate reading of the word *tempted* is ‘to test’.
 - Let’s be clear right from the start... God does *not* tempt man.
 - Temptation = seduction to do what *ought not* be done according to God’s Word.
 - **James 1:13-14**, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.”
 - **1 John 2:16**, “For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.”
- God will allow us to be tested.
 - Why does a teacher give tests to their students?
 - To determine what you know and how you can improve to be better moving forward.
- God defined the nation of Israel as His son.
 - **Recall** [chapter 2]: Jesus coming out of Egypt was a fulfillment of prophetic word.
 - **Exodus 4:22-23**, “Thus says the Lord, *Israel is my firstborn son*, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.”
 - God led Israel out of Egypt and into the wilderness [40 years]... and what was the result of their testing? [sin]
 - Now God leads His Son into the wilderness [40 days] for preparation for His ministry.
 - **Hebrews 5:8**, “Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.”
- **Fasting:** forsaking what you need physically, so you’re ‘emptied’ and dependent on the Lord to receive from him spiritually. [common practice; we’ll address more in depth down the road]

{verses 3-4}

“And the tempter came and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.’ But he answered, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

- We need to understand something important here.

- Jesus endured this temptation as a man. Is Jesus the incarnate God, absolutely!
 - **Philippians 2:6-7**, “who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”
- Jesus did not *give up* His deity when He took on flesh. He *temporarily* laid it aside so that he could identify with those He came to save, and so that we could identify with our Savior.
 - Are there occasions when Jesus would use His omnipotence to bring revelation that He is God in flesh? Yes [miracles, healing, raising people from the dead...]
- In this way, Jesus overcomes temptation as fully man, showing us that we, by the power of the Holy Spirit, can do the same!
 - **Hebrews 2:18**, “For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”
- **IMPORTANT:** Satan is not questioning whether or not Jesus is the Son of God.
 - The phrasing of his statement is better read, “*Since* you are the Son of God...”
 - He is calling on Jesus, in a critical state of starvation, to use his supernatural power to satisfy His own needs.
 - Could He have done so, of course! But Jesus came to do the will of the Father, not His own.
- The Israelites failed in this task in the wilderness.
 - When they got hungry, they complained, grumbled, demanded food, and expressed their desire to go back to Egypt!
 - **Exodus 16:3**, “...for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”
 - Yet God still provided for them by giving them an overabundance of bread [manna]
- To answer this temptation, Jesus uses the very Word of God.
 - **Deuteronomy 8:2-3**, “And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”
 - Self-gratification is one of the most frequent and all-consuming sins we will face.
 - If your first priority is *you* in every circumstance, then you have fallen into idolatry. [I **John 2:16**, “..the desires of the flesh”]
 - **QUOTE:** “Obedience to God’s will takes priority over self-gratification, even over the apparently essential provision of food.” [R. T. France]
 - **John 4:34**, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”
- When faced with the temptation to gratify your own desires, remember that you have the very presence of God in you.
 - When we see the world continue to fall short of the glory of God, it is because they are relying on their own limited strength to survive.

- This is *not* how we are to operate in Christ!
- **John 6:48-50**, “I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.”

[verses 5-7]

“Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

- Now Satan tries to deceive Jesus on holy ground, the temple of Jerusalem.
 - He is essentially asking Jesus to test God’s faithfulness/protection by throwing Himself off the temple.
- In the first temptation, Satan appeals to self-gratification. But now, he is appealing to physical proof of God’s faithfulness. [**1 John 2:16**, “...the lust of the eyes”]
- Satan even uses God’s Word [**Psalm 91:11-12**] in his temptation, although incomplete and out of context.
 - First, don’t think for a moment that the enemy will not try to tempt you when you’re at church, or sitting down to read your bible.
 - Second, we are to be extremely careful how we read & use God’s Word.
 - It does not exist to rationalize and justify our own personal desires.
 - It does not exist to satisfy our gratifications with theological manipulation.
 - Be like the Bereans [**Acts 17**] who study the scriptures daily to make sure that what we are being told is the full truth of God’s revealed Word.
- Jesus’ response to Satan’s use of scripture is with scripture [**Deuteronomy 6:16**]
 - We are not to put God to the test so that we have physical proof of His faithfulness.
 - Simply put, if God said it, it will happen!
 - Throughout Jesus’ ministry, people wanted proof of all He said about Himself.
 - **John 6:28-31**, “Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you *believe* in him whom he has sent.” So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”
 - Even Thomas needed physical evidence of what Jesus said would happen.
 - **John 20:29**, “Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’”
- **QUOTE:** “It is wrong to demand that God prove Himself faithful to His promises by giving us what He has promised on our terms.” [Thomas Constable]
 - Testing God is not trusting God.

[verses 8-11]

“Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then

Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.” Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.”

- Pure Idolatry: ignore the word and purpose of God, bow down to the enemy, and you can still have everything you’ve been promised.
- Matthew showed us by the genealogy of Jesus, He is the heir to the throne of Israel. He is the true king.
 - Now Satan tempts Jesus to achieve that goal by ignoring the purpose of God.
 - **Philippians 2:8**, “...he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”
 - Prior to reigning over all of humanity, which he will do when he returns to take His throne [Revelation 20-21], God’s purpose was to sacrifice His Son for the salvation of humanity.
 - **Psalm 2:7-8**, “I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.’”
 - As we pointed out last week, the word “begotten” can be used to refer to the resurrection of Christ.
 - There is no resurrection without death.
 - This is why Jesus would rebuke Peter later in his ministry.
 - **Matthew 16:22-23**, [after Jesus told his disciples that he would suffer and die] “And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”
- Jesus knew His purpose, and submitted Himself to His Father in Heaven. Nothing was going to derail that plan.
 - So Jesus rebukes Satan and drives Him away with one final response from God’s Word. [Deuteronomy 6:13]

Conclusion

- While we are in this world, we are susceptible to the temptations of the enemy, and will face them every day. But remember who is leading you!
 - **Romans 7:21-23 NLT**, “I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God’s law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me.”
 - **2 Corinthians 12:9**, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.“
- It is imperative that we remember that Jesus defeated sin and death on the cross.
 - It is Jesus in whom we identify, as He lived a life of example for us to follow.
 - **Hebrews 4:15**, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”
- So when temptation comes, we must consider the example of Jesus.

- **QUOTE:** “What we call temptation is not meant to make us sin; it is meant to enable us to conquer sin. It is not meant to make us bad, it is meant to make us good. It is not meant to weaken us, it is meant to make us emerge stronger and finer and purer from the ordeal.” [William Barclay]
- **James 1:2-4**, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”
- Are you following Jesus? Are you being led by the Holy Spirit in your life? Then most assuredly, He will allow you to be tested.
- 1. It is not by our own strength that we overcome temptation.
 - You can bet that in your most vulnerable state, the enemy will pounce.
 - **1 Peter 5:8-9**, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith...”
 - We must continuously be filled with the Spirit of God as we pursue righteousness in this world.
 - It is *only* by the power of the Spirit that we see victory over temptation.
 - **James 4:7**, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”
- 2. We resist temptation by the truth and power of the Word of God.
 - This is why, daily, we must arm ourselves with the sword of the Spirit.
 - **Psalm 119:11**, “Your word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against you.”
 - It is our defense so that we don’t fail when temptation comes our way.
 - **Psalm 17:4**, “With regard to the works of man, by the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent.”