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Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted^[a] by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

⁴ Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’^[b]”

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:

“He will command his angels concerning you,

and they will lift you up in their hands,

so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’^[c]”

⁷ Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’^[d]”

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’^[e]”

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

This is the word of the Lord,

Thank be to God

Brothers and Sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ,

My name is Pastor Erik Delange, if you can't tell from the name, I am one of Rich Delange's sons, and it's a pleasure to be here with you all this morning. This morning, as part of your Lenten sermon series on the sufferings of Jesus, we are going to look at the temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness. How he was tempted, how he resisted, and what that means for us. The book of Hebrews has this to say about Jesus' temptation. It says,

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

Tempted in every way as we are. Let me start with a question, when we look at our text for this morning, how many of you, are your biggest three temptations from the Devil, eating bread, jumping off a building to caught by Angels, or bowing down to Satan and worshipping him?

On the face of it, I'm willing to bet not that many—WE think!—but let's look beneath the Surface a little bit, because as we do, I think we will see indeed, that Jesus indeed was tempted in every way as we are, and this passage can give actually give us a deeper

awareness of the ways in which the Devil can and will try to tempt *us*. The text shows us three ways that Jesus *and we* are tempted. And I've summarized them as follows,

1. Sustenance
2. Spectacle
3. Shortcut

#1: Sustenance

Let's begin with Sustenance. Satan tempts Jesus at the end of a fast lasting forty day and forty nights, so he was very vulnerable to Satan's First temptation. Scripture put it this way, it says,

The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Now the desire for sustenance in and of itself is not a bad thing. The Lord's Prayer says, "give us this day our daily bread," So sustenance is something we are supposed to ask God for and trust in him for. But that it's just it. We are supposed to ask and trust GOD for our daily bread. This first temptation is not so much that Satan is tempting Jesus to eat bread, but he is tempting Jesus to trust in something *other than God* for sustenance, for daily bread. The assumption underneath the temptation is that God couldn't provide bread for Jesus, and so he needed to do some sort of magic trick to get it. If we're honest, we fall for this one all the time.

We are constantly tempted to trust something other than God to satisfy us. Human ingenuity, our own smarts, technology, the list Goes on.

For Jesus, he placed God's word above the need for Sustenance. For Jesus, in his physical human body, sustenance was still tremendously important. But the word of God was MORE important. It was more important for Jesus to look to God to provide all his needs than try to fulfill them himself.

The problem is not sustenance. The problem is when we look to something other than God for sustenance, they will let us down. It's only when we trust God *more* than our own physical need to be satisfied, that we will be free. We will rule over our appetites, and they won't rule over us.

Jesus response to the temptation for Sustenance, was scripture, The Word of God.

Which leads us to point number two.

#2: Spectacle

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

“He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’^[c]”

Satan must have been wise to Jesus’ first remedy for temptation: scripture. Because he tries to quote scripture in his argument here. Which is why it’s abundantly important that we don’t just quote scripture to win arguments, but that we *listen* to the voice and the *Spirit of God* as we quote scripture.

And I also want us to notice, in both of these first temptations, Satan begins with “if you are the Son of God,” he wants to bring Jesus’s identity and his relationship with God into question. Because the devil knows that if he can get us to not trust God, and not feel secure in his love, his temptation will be more effective.

Then he launches in to his second attack. Now, throwing ourselves off a building to see if angels will come and protect us might not be such an appealing thing in our churches and in our world today. We are a world that is suspicious of the existence of spiritual realities, skeptical that angels even exist let alone tempted to trust them to catch us from a tall building. But we all know the temptation to spectacle.

Let me ask you this, most of us here know the importance of going to church. We are here after all. But, in our world there are so many options for churches to attend these days, and I’m sure many people you know have changed churches or have participated in what has come to be known as “church shopping” when they move to a new city. Let me ask, how often do people base their decision for a church on whether the word of God is preached, and whether the church serves the community. And how often is the main reason, the spectacle. The sound. The worship style. The song choices. Not the biblical content of the Pastor’s sermon, the fruit of the Spirit from his preaching, but rather was he engaging, was he interesting, is he hip and are his stories relevant to my life? SPECTACLE.

Jesus response here is very interesting, he says, ⁷ Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’^[d]”

Jesus combats the first temptation by modeling for us how to look to the word of God, but this second temptation he combats in a very different way. Let me ask you this,

How effective do you think this passage would be in your fight against sin. Devil comes to you, tempts you do something you know your not supposed to do and you say, “Satan, don’t put the Lord your God to the test.” I’m gonna guess that’s not super effective. Which leads us to the second remedy that Jesus has for our temptation. In response to the temptation to Spectacle, Jesus responds by Saving Us. I’ll explain.

The first temptation, Jesus models a way of life for us to follow based on his **human nature**, but in this second temptation Jesus resists temptation based on his **divine nature**. Here in response to this second temptation, Jesus not only responds by quoting

scripture, by showing us how to follow God, but by *revealing his Lordship*. He responds by revealing that he is God! And in doing so he saves us. The salvation and defeat of Satan that culminates in the cross, begins here in the wilderness.

Here's something to chew on throughout your week: Jesus resistance of temptation doesn't just show us how to resist the Devil, Jesus by being fully God and fully human at the same time, actually RESISTS SATAN FOR US. And in doing so, he reconciles us back to God, gives us his spirit, what Romans 8 calls the Spirit of Adoption, so that we, like Jesus, can become God's children. Have an unshakeable identity, not on our own merits and wisdom. But on God's merits and wisdom in Jesus. Free gift. Adoption.

#3 Shortcut

And this leads us to our final temptation in this sermon. The temptation to shortcut. Scripture says,

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Once again, I don't think many of us feel we've been tempted to worship the devil. But if we think we've never been tempted worship the Devil, that because, when we think of the devil because we picture him as a little red guy with horns, going "muahahaha." But you know Satan doesn't actually look like that. Satan is described as a serpent in genesis, as a mighty beast in Revelation, but he also shows up all throughout scripture and our world in a million different disguises. Often, the disguise he wears most, is a real friendly face, offering us a shortcut.

You see, Jesus knew, that when Satan offered him all the kingdoms of the world, he knew that at the end of the book he would ascend into heaven, declaring "all authority in heaven and on earth have been given to me." He knew that was coming, and probably the devil even knew that would be the outcome of Jesus life, death, and resurrection. That he would one day be given authority over the whole world by his Father. BUT Jesus also knew that he would only get there by passing through the worst physical, emotional, and spiritual torture imaginable: the cross. And in the third temptation Satan promises him a shortcut. You don't have to suffer. Bow down to me, and I'll give them to you.

Listen, worshipping the Devil is never an attractive proposition, until, that is, you are faced with an unimaginably difficult situation ahead of you. Then it's pretty tempting. Why go through all the rigor of training and working your body for the big game, when you can just take steroids. Why die to self many times a day with sacrifice, hard conversations, and compromise in Marriage when you could just look at pornography. Why risk losing your job, money for your family, when you could just cut that corner at work that your boss is asking you to do. It's so small.

It's because what is right, is often difficult. And what is easy, is often wrong.

But Jesus resisted! And I love the way Jesus resists this one,

Scripture says,

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’^[e]”

He didn't rationalize, he didn't even give this proposition a second thought, possibly because of how tempting he knew avoiding the cross would be. He just said, get away from me, and then turned his eyes to worship. Probably the most effective tool you have for fighting the devil in your life, is worship. Because when you worship, you commune with the one who meets all your needs, who made you just the way you are on purpose and loves you completely, and when you worship, more and more, you come face to face with the most attractive being in the universe. The more you worship and grow in your relationship with God, the more your former illusions and distractions and idols will lose their lustre. They will cease to be attractive to you when presented next to the living God: the source and fulfilment of all your desires.

So. Jesus defeated Sustenance with Scripture, Spectacle by Saving us,

And the way he avoided the Shortcut, is by SERVING God anyway, despite how hard it will be. We defeat shortcut, by serving God. Jesus knew, following God would not always be easy. That he would be whipped and humiliated in front of a hung jury. That Pilate, who knew his innocence would wash his hands of it and let him be condemned to die. But the powerful thing is, the reason Jesus did not give in to the 3 temptations is—Also written in the Book of Hebrews: Joy. Hebrews 12 says, “for the Joy set before him [true and lasting joy], he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God.” And here's the thing: he did all that for you, and he did all that for me, so that through Jesus life, death, and resurrection, we could be reconciled back to God, sin defeated, and partake in Everlasting Life: The Joy of the Lord, the delight of God, which can defeat all temptations. Let us pray.