

Luke 4:1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.

³ The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” ⁴ Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’”

⁵ Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And the devil said to him, “To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. ⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” ⁸ Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

⁹ Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰ for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’ ¹¹ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’” ¹² Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ¹³ When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

TODAY IS THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT. THE GOSPEL LESSON FOR TODAY IS ABOUT JESUS IN THE WILDERNESS.

A SUMMARY OF THE EXAMPLE JESUS PROVIDES FOR US CAN BE FOUND IN EPHESIANS 6:10. LISTEN TO THE TRANSLATION FOUND IN THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE.

“BE STRONG IN THE LORD, DRAW YOUR STRENGTH FROM HIM AND BE EMPOWERED THROUGH YOUR UNION WITH HIM, AND IN THE POWER OF HIS BOUNDLESS MIGHT.”

THIS IS WHAT JESUS DID THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE, AND HOW HE WAS ABLE TO MEET ALL OF HIS TEMPTATIONS HEAD-ON AND YET NEVER SIN.

WE OFTEN THINK OF TEMPTATION SIMPLY AS THE DESIRE AND MEANS TO DO SOMETHING WE KNOW IS WRONG.

IT CAN BE AS SUPERFICIAL AS EATING OR DRINKING THINGS NOT GOOD FOR US.

TEMPTATION MAY ALSO BE AS SERIOUS AS- THEFT, LYING, ADULTERY, ASSAULT, MURDER, ETC.

BUT THERE IS ANOTHER TYPE OF TEMPTATION THAT IS MORE SUBTLE, IN THAT IS MORE LIKE A TEST OF OUR LOYALTY OR FAITHFULNESS TO GOD.

THESE KINDS OF TEMPTATIONS INVOLVE CHOICES THAT ARE NOT EXACTLY RIGHT, BUT OFFER GREAT BENEFIT.

HERE IS A HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE: LET’S SAY YOU HAD THE POWER TO IMMEDIATELY REMOVE PRESIDENT PUTIN’S FREE WILL SO YOU COULD CONTROL HIM COMPLETELY.

THERE IS NO QUESTION ABOUT THE GOOD THAT WOULD DO FOR MILLIONS OF PEOPLE-IF NOT THE WHOLE WORLD.

THE PROBLEM IS- GOD ORDAINED EVERY PERSON SHOULD HAVE THE FREE WILL TO MAKE GOOD OR BAD, EVIL OR RIGHTEOUS CHOICES.

CONSEQUENTLY, TO TAKE AWAY THE FREE WILL OF ANY ONE, SO THEY CAN NEITHER THINK, ACT, NOR EVEN DESIRE WHAT YOU DO NOT ALLOW, GOES AGAINST GOD'S WILL.

THEREFORE, ENGAGING IN WHAT SEEMS TO BE A "LESSER EVIL" IS NOT JUSTIFIED EVEN IF IT PRODUCES WHAT SOME MIGHT CALL THE "GREATER GOOD"

OF COURSE, NONE OF US, ARE CAPABLE OF TAKING OVER ANOTHER PERSON IN THIS WAY, THEREFORE WE ARE NOT TEMPTED TO DO IT.

HOWEVER, THE SAME IS NOT TRUE FOR JESUS. HE WAS TEMPTED TO DO THINGS HE WAS PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF DOING, INCLUDING USURPING FREE WILL

THIS IS ONE OF THE REASONS JESUS NEEDED TO BE TESTED BEFORE HE BEGAN HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY, BECAUSE THE CHOICES HE WOULD MAKE WOULD CHANGE THE WORLD.

THERE IS A STORY OUT OF THE HISTORY OF OUR OWN COUNTRY WHICH MIGHT HELP US BETTER UNDERSTAND WHY JESUS WAS SENT TO BE TESTED IN THE WILDERNESS.

THE UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD WAS ONE OF THE MAJOR RAILROADS THAT UNITED THE WEST WITH THE EAST.

THERE WERE MANY CHALLENGES THE BUILDERS HAD TO FACE, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH WAS TO CONSTRUCT BRIDGES OVER RIVERS AND CANYONS.

THE ARCHITECT AND CHIEF BUILDER OF A TRESTLE BRIDGE OVER ONE LARGE CANYON SURPRISED MANY OF THE WORKERS BY HIS UNUSUAL ACTION AFTER THE PROJECT WAS COMPLETED.

THE MAN ORDERED ONTO THE BRIDGE- A TRAIN WITH AN ENOUGH EXTRA CARS LOADED WITH EQUIPMENT TO DOUBLE THE AVERAGE WEIGHT ANY TRAIN WOULD NORMALLY HAUL.

NEXT, HE ORDERED EVERYONE OFF THE TRAIN AND LEFT IT SITTING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NEWLY CONSTRUCTED BRIDGE OVER NIGHT.

ONE WORKER ASKED THE BUILDER IF HE WAS TRYING TO BREAK THE BRIDGE.

"NO," HE REPLIED, "I'M TRYING TO PROVE THAT THE BRIDGE WON'T BREAK."

THAT IS SIMILAR TO THE HOLY SPIRIT'S PURPOSE IN SENDING JESUS OUT INTO THE WILDERNESS TO ENDURE THE GREAT DISCOMFORT, LONELINESS, AND TESTING HE ENCOUNTERED.

THERE, BEFORE HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY ACTUALLY BEGAN, HEAVEN AND HELL WOULD WATCH TO SEE IF JESUS WAS READY AND ABLE TO FULFILL HIS LIFE'S PURPOSE.

THE DEVIL TEMPTED JESUS IN ORDER TO DISTRACT JESUS FROM FULFILLING HIS LIFE'S WORK.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF SATAN WAS TO PERSUADE JESUS TO REDEFINE HIS PURPOSE, FOR COMING TO EARTH TO DIE FOR OUR SINS.

THE BASIS FOR SATAN'S INVITATION FOR JESUS TO GO HIS OWN WAY IS FOUND IN THE PHRASE: "IF YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD".

WHAT THE DEVIL WAS REALLY SAYING WAS THAT SINCE JESUS IS GOD'S SON, GOD IN THE FLESH-WHY SHOULD HE HAVE TO FOLLOW HIS FATHER'S WILL.

SO LET US LOOK AT THESE TEMPTATIONS TO FIND OUT WHY IT IS A GOOD THING JESUS PASSED EACH TEST, AND WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THIS FOR OUR OWN LIVES.

THE FIRST TEMPTATION TO TURN STONES INTO BREAD, SO HE COULD EAT, SEEMS INNOCUOUS, SINCE NO ONE ELSE WAS THERE TO SEE JESUS DO IT.

PERHAPS YOU MAY HEAR IN THE SUGGESTION JESUS TURN A STONE INTO BREAD, AN ECHO OF SATAN'S SUGGESTION TO THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS.

THE SERPENT TOLD EVE, AND ADAM WHO WAS WITH HER, THAT THERE WAS NOTHING WRONG WITH THEM ENJOYING THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT.

THE MESSAGE BEHIND THAT TEMPTATION WAS GOD'S WORD CANNOT BE TRUSTED.

SIMILARLY, BEHIND JESUS' FIRST TEMPTATION WAS SATAN'S DESIRE TO COMPEL HIM TO NOT TRUST IN HIS FATHER TO PROVIDE HIS NEEDS.

IT WAS AS IF SATAN WERE TELLING JESUS HE NEEDED TO BE PREPARED TO TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF WITHOUT HELP FROM GOD- BECAUSE HIS FATHER WAS UNTRUSTWORTHY.

THE NEXT TEST LISTED IN THE GOSPEL READING COULD BE SEEN AS THE TEMPTATION FOR POLITICAL POWER.

JESUS WAS TOLD HE COULD RULE THE WORLD IN HIS OWN WAY IF HE ONLY ABANDONED HIS FATHER AND WORSHIPPED SATAN.

THE IDEA HERE WAS THAT JESUS DID NOT NEED TO FIND HIS IDENTITY OR POWER IN GOD.

BUT BEHIND THIS WAS ALSO THE SUGGESTION JESUS REJECT THE FACT THAT ALL REAL POWER COMES FROM GOD AND GOD ALONE.

THE LAST TEST WAS THE SUGGESTION JESUS SEIZE RELIGIOUS CONTROL BY A PUBLIC DISPLAY ON THE TEMPLE GROUNDS, SHOWING ANGELS SAVING HIM FROM A FATAL FALL.

HERE SATAN USED SCRIPTURE TO TRY TO LURE JESUS INTO GETTING HIS FATHER TO PROVE HIS LOVE -BY SENDING ANGELS TO SAVE HIM IF JESUS JUMPED TO FROM A HIGH PLACE.

THEREFORE, THE REAL TEMPTATION WAS FOR JESUS TO TURN THIS TIME OF BEING TESTED TO SEE IF HE WOULD STAY FAITHFUL TO HIS FATHER, INTO AN OPPORTUNITY TO TEST GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO HIM.

ULTIMATELY SATAN'S DESIRE WAS TO PERSUADE JESUS TO MAKE HIS FATHER SERVE HIM, INSTEAD OF JESUS SERVING GOD.

NOTICE THIS TEMPTATION WAS ONE THAT JESUS FACED AGAIN IN A MORE POWERFUL WAY IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.

IT WAS THERE, THE SON OF GOD PRAYED TO HIS FATHER THAT GOD WOULD TAKE THE CUP OF SUFFERING AWAY, SO THAT HE WOULD NOT HAVE TO DRINK FROM IT AND DIE ON THE CROSS.

THEN, AFTER JESUS FINISHED ALL OF HIS PRAYERS THE SOLDIERS CAME TO ARREST HIM.

HERE WE FIND ANOTHER TEST, WOULD JESUS REALLY SUBMIT TO THE TEMPLE AND ROMAN AUTHORITIES- OR WOULD HE SAVE HIMSELF.

THERE IS AN OLD HYMN THAT DESCRIBES THIS SCENE AND THE CHOICE JESUS MADE. SOME OF THE LYRICS ARE:

"THEY BOUND THE HANDS OF JESUS IN THE GARDEN WHERE HE PRAYED, THEY LED HIM THRU THE STREETS IN SHAME.

THEY SPAT UPON THE SAVIOR SO PURE AND FREE FROM SIN THEY SAID, "CRUCIFY HIM: HE'S TO BLAME.

HE COULD HAVE CALLED TEN THOUSAND ANGELS TO DESTROY THE WORLD AND SET HIM FREE.

HE COULD HAVE CALLED TEN THOUSAND ANGELS- BUT HE DIED ALONE, FOR YOU AND ME.

UPON HIS PRECIOUS HEAD THEY PLACED A CROWN OF THORNS, THEY LAUGHED AND SAID "BEHOLD THE KING'.

THEY STRUCK HIM AND THEY CURSED HIM, AND MOCKED HIS HOLY NAME. ALL ALONE HE SUFFERED EVERYTHING.

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INDEED, JESUS DID NOT CALL UPON HEAVEN FOR RESCUE, EITHER IN THE GARDEN, WHEN BEING BEATEN AND MOCKED, OR WHILE HE HUNG ON THE CROSS.

JESUS CONTINUED TO RESIST EVERY TEMPTATION. HE PASSED EACH TEST SO THAT WE CAN BE FORGIVEN AND SAVED.

THIS IS THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT OUR SAVIOR, AND GOD’S PLAN FOR THE REDEMPTION OF FALLEN HUMANITY, FOUND IN THE GOSPEL STORY.

FURTHERMORE, WE CAN BENEFIT BY LOOKING BACK AT THE WILDERNESS TEMPTATIONS JESUS MET AND AVOIDED.

THEY OFFER US GUIDANCE ABOUT HOW WE MAY MORE OFTEN PASS SIMILAR TESTS IN LIFE.

THE FIRST THING TO REMEMBER IS, EVEN THOUGH JESUS WAS GOD INCARNATE, AS A HUMAN BEING HE, LIKE WE, DID NOT RELY ON HIS OWN STRENGTH ALONE.

INSTEAD, JESUS TURNED TO GOD, HIS FATHER, FOR WHAT HE NEEDED, THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE AND DURING HIS SUFFERING AND DEATH

AND SO, AT THE CORE OF ALL THE TEMPTATIONS JESUS MET AND OVERCAME WAS HIS IDENTITY.

EVEN THOUGH JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD, HE COULD NOT SIMPLY DO AS HE PLEASED WITHOUT THE AGREEMENT OF HIS FATHER.

THIS IS A REMINDER FOR US AND THE CHOICES WE MAKE. WILL WE, LIKE JESUS, FIND OUR IDENTITY IN GOD AND HIS WILL, OR GO OUR OWN WAY?

LET US NEVER FORGET THAT ALL THE TEMPTATIONS JESUS FACED, AND WE WILL FACE, CONCERN WHO EXISTS FOR WHOM.

THE KEY QUESTION WE MUST ANSWER EACH DAY IS: DOES GOD LIVE TO SERVE AND PLEASE US, OR DO WE LIVE TO SERVE AND PLEASE GOD?

CHRISTIAN AUTHOR C.S. LEWIS ANSWERS THIS QUESTION BY COMPARING PEOPLE TO CARS POWERED BY GASOLINE.

“A CAR IS MADE TO RUN ON GASOLINE, AND IT WOULD NOT RUN PROPERLY ON ANYTHING ELSE. NOW GOD DESIGNED THE HUMAN MACHINE TO RUN ON HIMSELF.

HE HIMSELF IS THE FUEL OUR SPIRITS WERE DESIGNED TO BURN, OR THE FOOD OUR SPIRITS WERE DESIGNED TO FEED ON. THERE IS NO OTHER.

THAT IS WHY IT IS JUST NO GOOD ASKING GOD TO MAKE US HAPPY IN OUR OWN WAY...

GOD CANNOT GIVE US A HAPPINESS AND PEACE APART FROM HIMSELF, BECAUSE IT IS NOT THERE. THERE IS NO SUCH THING.”

THIS IS WHAT OUR SAVIOR JESUS KNEW AND DEMONSTRATED THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE IN THE FLESH. AND IT IS WHAT HE WANTS US TO LEARN AND LIVE AS WELL.

LET US PRAY: BLESSED ARE YOU, O LORD OUR GOD, WE CONFESS OUR LIFE COMES FROM YOU AND TO YOU WE WILL RETURN.

IN THESE FORTY DAYS OF LENT, YOU LEAD US INTO THE DESERT OF REPENTANCE -THAT IN THIS PILGRIMAGE OF SACRIFICE AND PRAYER, WE MIGHT LEARN TO BE YOUR PEOPLE ONCE MORE.

OPEN OUR EYES TO YOUR PRESENCE IN THE WORLD, AND THE PLACES WHERE YOU CALL US TO SERVE YOU. BE WITH US THROUGHOUT OUR JOURNEY IN LIFE BECAUSE WITHOUT YOU WE ARE LOST.

TO YOU ALONE O GOD, FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT BE DOMINION AND GLORY, HONOR AND PRAISE, FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY: LUKE 4:1-13 “TESTING 1-2-3”

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