

Dealing With The Devil

Matthew 4:1-11

11/09/25

Please open your Bibles again today to Matthew 4. A woman who trying to lose some weight and had asked her friends to pray for her. She was very diligent and stuck to her diet very strictly. She even took a new route to work so as not to drive by her favorite bakery on the way. One day, however, she came to work with a big coffee cake. Her coworkers asked what was going on. She said "I "accidentally" drove past my favorite bakery this morning and I saw this delicious coffee cake in the window. So I prayed to God and said, 'if you really want me to have this coffee cake, have an open parking spot right in front.' And sure enough there was one... on my 8th time around!" Say temptation. If you've been with us the last two Sundays, you know we've been talking about temptation and today we're going to look at Jesus' third temptation to see what we can learn to help us.

If you are able, please stand as we read from Matt 4:1-11 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted 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 does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" 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.'" 7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 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.'" 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

We are learning from our Master how to battle our enemy just as Navy Seals learn tactics from other Seals on the battlefield. We've discussed ways to avoid temptation and learned that we are not to use what God has given us for purely our own pleasure nor should we put God to a foolish test. Most importantly, we discovered the most effective weapon against temptation is God's Word for Jesus wielded this sharp sword against every single temptation that came His way. We learned much more and if you missed either of the last two sermons, go on YouTube and catch up that you might have victory over temptation.

Today we find the devil trying a third time to lead the Master astray. As we mentioned last week, just because you've overcome one temptation, don't think you're done. You're not. Satan doesn't give up. Even after Jesus passed all three of these tests, Luke tells us the Devil left Jesus **until** an opportune time. Say opportune. Satan waits for those opportune times. Just because you passed a test this morning doesn't mean you won't face one this afternoon and just because you've lived a godly life for 50 years doesn't mean you're out of the woods, or desert of temptation. The enemy often makes repeated assaults to topple your castle of faith with your disobedience. He will storm your gates again and again if he thinks he can somehow bring you down. Stand firm!

For this third temptation, we find Satan taking Jesus on another field trip and this time he's taken the Savior to a very high mountain. The NKJV says, "exceedingly high mountain." We are not told where this mountain was and we're not even sure it's an actual mountain at all for from their location, they can see all the kingdoms of the world. Luke says [4:5] he showed Him all these kingdoms in a "moment of time." It sounds like not only those kingdoms which existed in Jesus' day but **all** earthly kingdoms past, present, and future.

This would not only include the Roman Empire which was still growing at that point, but also the Indian empires throughout North, Central, and South Americas; the tribal empires of Africa and all the native groups throughout southeast Asia. And if it did include those of all time, they could also see Babylon, Assyria, the Mongols, Imperial Japan, the Chinese dynasties, and Hitler's 3rd Reich. They could see the Vikings, the British, and the USA. As well as any future world kingdoms yet to come.

And with all of that in front of them, they also saw all their splendor and glory, all their wealth, gold, silver, treasures, massive buildings and armies, all their power and influence. And Satan leans over and says to Jesus, "It can all be yours! Wouldn't you like to have control over all these nations and leaders? You can! And it won't cost you an arm and a leg or all your blood. All you have to do is to bow and worship me."

Notice that Jesus didn't argue with Satan. He didn't say, "They're not yours, they're already mine." Why not? Because Satan **is** the prince of this earth. In Luke's Gospel, Satan says, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given **to me**, and I can give it to anyone I want to." Adam gave it to him when he sinned in Eden. Three times in John's Gospel, Jesus calls Satan the prince of this world. (Jn 12:31, 14:30, 16:11). The Amplified Bible calls Him the ruler or evil genius of this world and 1 John 5:19 says, "... the whole world is under the control of the evil one." In 2 Cor 4:4 Paul calls the devil the god of this age. Satan has command and control over all the seats of political and military power. That's his domain and territory. This is why the world looks like it does, why the United Nations is so broken. This is why the unjust succeed and the poor suffer. Look at how corrupt virtually every earthly kingdom has

been from time immemorial! It won't always be this way but as long as Satan's in charge, it will be. All these are Satan's kingdoms to offer.

We may think this third temptation was not very tempting to Jesus. After all, He's God! He's also fully human! He can sin, He can fall. He will rule these kingdoms one day anyway. But, that's only because He died and rose again to buy it all back! That's **only** because He suffered rejection and bore the unbearable weight of all the world's sin; all the sins of every single person **in** all those kingdoms of the world before them. Satan was offering Jesus an **easy** way to gain control without having to suffer, without rejection, without having to die, without the cross. Each of these three temptations was actually a way to avoid some type of suffering. Hunger, injury, the cross. To avoid experiencing the consequences of sin. To take an easy way out. Don't tell me it wasn't tempting. It could have gone the other way. This might have been even **more** tempting than coffee cake after His 40 day fast. See how many people play the lottery? Get rich quick without suffering at work! See how many people fall for other schemes, snake oil cures, or whatever shortcuts and easy ways to get what we want. We all want the gain without the pain. Jesus didn't like pain any more than we do. It hurt Him as much as it hurts us! "Oh Jesus, go directly to the throne. Do not pass go, but do collect all the world's wealth." How many of us would turn that down?

Did Jesus want control of all those kingdoms? Of course He did! He could end all this suffering and usher in justice and righteousness. This was extremely tempting! Massively so! Talk about a deal with the devil. Many people have made deals with the devil for a lot less. How many gifted musicians are singing Satan's songs because he offered them fame and fortune they never would have gotten if they had kept singing in church for God's glory. Or actors who are famous but only so because they agreed to roles that glorify adultery, fornication, drugs, murder or other sin rather than their Creator and His ways? Or politicians who compromised their Christianity because they knew if they didn't, they'd never get elected? Or someone who took a job hiding their love for Jesus Christ. We've all been tempted on this exceedingly high mountain, have we not? And sometimes we've passed, and sometimes we've failed. Robert E Lee story-Lost war, his home, his money, his citizenship, his honor. A man he didn't know came and offered him a substantial amount of money to use his name for a store he was going to open. Lee needed the money badly, but he wasn't sure about the man's character.

Oh my friends, let's remember today that the devil plays for keeps. In order to break French control over Haiti in 1791, the leaders of the island made a pact with the devil through a voodoo ceremony. And Haiti is still in spiritual and literal darkness today. Gangs, drugs, theft, murder, hunger, etc. So very sad. Is this still impacting Haiti? I don't know but as far as I know, no leader from Haiti that has ever officially and openly renounced the agreement. The Devil's not fooling around and he doesn't just put the

game back in the box when life game is over. Hell is forever. His offers **always** lead to **MORE** pain and **more** suffering than the temptation ever avoids. Always. There are no spiritual shortcuts. We have to live out our faith day by day sometimes with pain, grief, or poverty.

All you have to do, Satan says, is to fall down and worship me. Theologian Thomas Aquinas said, "Whoever ... worships the devil must first fall down." Ain't that the truth? And many have and many are. "Humble yourself before me," Satan says. "Give me your honor, respect, money, dreams, your very life, and I'll give you what you're most hungry for."

How did Jesus respond? Your eternity and mine are on the line. He has an opportunity to bypass the cross. No flogging, no spit, no betrayal. Vs 10 "Ok then," Jesus says, "I'll take it." No praise God, He didn't! If He had, think of what could have been. He really said, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Say Shew! Once again, Jesus uses what to fight temptation? Holy Scripture! Another quote from Deuteronomy warning the Israelites before they took possession of the Promised Land. Of course it echoes the very first commandment in Ex 20 which says You shall have no other gods before or beside Me. Our Creator, Provider, and Savior is jealous of our worship and our service and our love and He has every right to be. He did **all** for us. We owe **all** to Him. If Jesus had fallen to worship one of the very angels He had created, you and I would be forever lost in our sins and bound for eternal hell without a hope or a prayer. Oh my friends, let's learn again from our Example. There are some things worse than suffering, than pain. Worship the Lord your God **only**! Say only. There's no room in your heart for a second throne. **Serve** the Lord your God only! We don't have the time, money or energy to split our allegiances. Don't worship your work, your spouse, or your hobby. Don't serve these either except as you serve God through them. Hear the Word of God today! **Heed** the Word of God today!

Jesus also addressed Satan directly and told him to get away! Say get away! We must do the same! Rebuke him, not in your own name or power or authority, but in the name that is above every name, the name of Jesus. Tell him to get away from you and don't leave your door open for him to get back in. Don't drive around the block 8 times. I'm going to dump out **this** glass of whiskey, but I'll leave the rest of the bottle just in case. There's a reason hard drinks are called spirits and they aren't holy spirits. Don't close that porn window on your laptop or phone but keep the link. Don't give the devil a foothold. Don't give any opportunity to the flesh, to your appetites that will trip us up every time. Don't make provision for sin, just in case you have a bad day or need a lift.

What do you **really** want most in life? And what are you willing to do to get it? Many people are trading their very lives for dollar bills that they think will buy them happiness and contentment. They're trading the skills, abilities, and health God gave

them to store up treasures on earth. Or sacrifice their marriage for their own happiness at the expense of everyone else's. Even when we want something that's very good, be careful not to compromise to get it! I'm so thankful for Winsome Sears who said, "I'm a Christian first and a republican second and that's the way it's always going to be." I believe she'd rather lose the election than her integrity. But don't tell me it's not tempting!

Now before we finish our mini-series on temptation today, I want to make a few observations. 1. Know your weaknesses. Say weaknesses. We all have them. Let he or she that **thinks** they stand take heed lest you fall. If we're not aware of where we are weakest, rest assured the devil knows, and he'll exploit our soft underbelly every time. Know when you're most vulnerable. He'll tempt you with food when you're hungry, with theft when you're poor, with anger when you're tired, and with sex when you're lonely, with pride when you're rich. Know your weaknesses.

2. The best time to prepare for winter is before it comes. You don't wait till it starts snowing to cut your firewood. Don't wait till the blizzard's in full swing before you check your oil tank. Right Hank? VDOT pretreats the roads whenever the forecast calls for nasty. Pretreat your roads! Temptation's coming! Especially if you know you're going somewhere or doing something that will be particularly tempting for you! Billy Graham once said, "Every stage of life has its own temptations and dangers, and Satan will do all he can to exploit them. The time to prepare is now, not when it arrives." Prepare ahead of time!

3. Consider the source from which various suggestions or ideas come. Did the Holy Spirit raise them up through prayer and Scripture, through meditation or other believers? Or did they come from an unsaved friend? The TV? Or the great god of Social media? The devil has plenty of good ideas, but like these he tempted Jesus with, they are offered at the wrong time and for the wrong reasons. Consider the source.

4. Let's realize today that the Devil is real! Say he's real. He wants you to believe he's not. Some pastors will tell you he's a metaphor for evil or an outdated fictional character. No! The Bible refers to him repeatedly. Jesus Himself clearly did. If anyone would know whether Satan is real or not, it would be Jesus! 1 Peter 5:8-9 warns us to, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings." He's real and he's on the prowl and because he's real, so is temptation. Be on the lookout, be wise and be prepared to say no.

5. Jesus is also real and He can help us. Through His Holy Spirit living within us. As we have quoted each single Sunday, Heb 2:18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." Learn from His example, copy His example, call on His help and power when you are tempted.

6. God's word is powerful! Charles Spurgeon said, "The written Word is Christ's sword. See how swiftly he drew it out of its sheath. What a sharp two-edged sword is this to be used against Satan! You also, believer, have this powerful weapon in your hand. Let no man take it from you. Believe in the inspiration of Scripture!" This Word is our weapon against the enemy's temptations. Learn it, cherish it, use it often and use it well.

Oh Robert E Lee... He really needed the money. What would you do? General Lee responded, "My name is all I have left. And it is not for sale." Are you for sale? Have we already sold out? If you realize this morning **you've** made a deal with the devil, break it today. Maybe it was a conscious decision, maybe you just kind of slid into it. Either way, you don't have to stay in it. Jesus died and rose again to deliver us from evil and from the evil one! Break your agreement today!