

Matthew 41112011
Bridge of Hope
March 6, 2011

“Temptation Part 3”

Introduction: We have been talking for a couple weeks about temptation or testing. Kandy and Joanne have spoken to you about the temptation or testing that Jesus experienced in the wilderness after being baptized in the Jordan river by the John the Baptizer. This was a momentous occasion as there was this amazing scene where the Spirit of God descends from Heaven in the form like a dove and rests upon Jesus. We also hear the voice of the Father from Heaven express His pleasure with His Son. Kandy made an excellent point here, that many of us, having experienced this very “spiritual” moment would want to stay there...bask in the moment....but not Jesus....The text has Jesus going right into the wilderness, lead by the Spirit...why? To be tempted or tested.....not our idea of a spiritual moment....

Matthew 4:1-11 ESV ¹Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶and 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.'

⁷Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.' ⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'

¹¹Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

It is hard for us to fathom that God would actually lead us to a place of testing, especially after such a ‘spiritual’ moment, but this is exactly what happens to the God-man Jesus....

What we see in this story is the undoing of the terrible decision made by our father Adam...who had it made! He lived in the Garden of Eden and was blessed with direct communion with God. Adam, in one fell swoop, destroyed all that God had intended for man-kind. Jesus was here to restore all that Adam made a mess of....Adam enjoyed a feast, but after this amazing spiritual experience with God the Father, actually speaking out loud, Jesus began to fast for 40 days....Adam, again lived in a beautiful Garden....Jesus followed the leading of the Spirit into the empty wilderness....barren and desolate and there he ate nothing. Adam yielded to temptation and as a result was cast out of the Garden into the wilderness. Adam is our "father" and we, as his children are borne into Adam's sin. Jesus basically picks up where Adam left off....and as Joanne pointed out last week, in stark contrast to the people of Israel in the desert, Jesus handles himself with the Holy Spirit's leading and is victorious.

Luke's account of this story is interesting in that it actually says Jesus was tempted for all 40 of those days....Jesus understood who He was and understood what His role was to be while on this earth at His first coming....and Kandy captured it best with one word: humility....and that thought launches us into our discussion today....

- "Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Matthew 4:8,9 ESV

1. Wrong Allegiance-This temptation is simply a test of Jesus' allegiance to the Father. It is a direct attack on His commitment to do the Father's will. Think about it this way...imagine the conversation going something like this: "You want glory, fame and power? You don't need to go to a cross to do that....c'mon...I thought your "Father" loves you and is well pleased with you. It sure doesn't look like it does it? Why are you out here in the desert suffering and starving? All you have to do is worship me and the entire world is yours. You want a crown? You don't need to die and be buried for that...we can do that without all that crazy death stuff....You don't need to be flogged and spit on and arrested and mocked....just worship me and all of this is yours."

Many of the enemies' tactics are to get you to have the wrong allegiance. Interestingly, in testing our faith, God also will allow these times to show YOU where your allegiance lies. Where your allegiance lies is where your worship goes.

Where does your allegiance lie? Whom do you worship? You may say, "I don't worship Satan!" but every time we sin, we are choosing to worship Satan. Worship is not just about what happens at church...worship is about your lifestyle...what you look at is an act of worship...your conversation and what you do with your life are signs of allegiance and ultimately speak of who you worship.

When Satan or one of his demons approach you trying and testing your allegiance, do you recognize it for what it is....when He tries to get you to place him in a place of priority in your life over God, do you know what is really going on? When you are tempted to be selfish and only care about your own life...do you realize that is a worship issue...not just looking out for yourself....when you choose yourself, you are really choosing Satan....because ultimately, you will bow down to something....Bob Dylan said everybody serves somebody and he was right.

- ¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.' ¹¹Then the devil left him..."

2. Right Allegiance-True to form from the preceding tests/temptations, Jesus responds with the right allegiance....allegiance to His father. Whether we want to admit it or not, the easy way is sooooo tempting.

None of us wants to really carry our cross and follow Jesus....its really hard and messy and worst of all, we fail at it constantly...

Oftentimes we use our failure in times of testing/temptation to determine our allegiance....this failure is usually due to our attempts to overcome sin and temptation in our own strength....not using the example of Jesus here and not relying on the power of the Holy Spirit....

Allegiance is something that starts in our heart...it starts deep down inside of us and is borne out in our actions. Our actions are the fruit of our worship and allegiance.

It is interesting how we can speak or profess our allegiance to God but our actions and our response to testing/temptation speak differently. Jesus was consistent with His profession and practice...both spoke loudly that there was nothing that could come between Himself and the Father.... Where is your allegiance? Does your life speak of your allegiance or is your allegiance simply reduced to empty words?

Implications:

There are some implications to this thing that we need to know if we are going to live a life dedicated to God. If we desire our allegiance to be pointed toward Christ there are a few things we need grasp...things that are spoken and implied in this story:

1. Jesus is victorious-As was mentioned earlier, Jesus approached this testing in humility. He could have very easily turned the stones into bread due to his hunger....He is the Son of God and has every right to rule and reign over all the kingdoms of the world, but he chose to be obedient to the plan of the Father....Jesus is the victor....

Here's the rub...many times you and I want to take credit for this victory...we would never actually say that, but every time we are faced with our enemy, many of us want to stand in the face of testing and temptation on our own based on thoughts, ideas and even theology that tells us WE are victorious and this is only partially true...

You can NEVER have victory without Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. Without acknowledging Him for who He is and remembering who you were and are....Victory is not achievable...but when your allegiance is placed in the right place and you humbly understand where you stand....that Jesus is Lord, victory is already yours!

¹³ You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ¹⁴ He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross. Colossians 2:13-15 NLT

You cannot change yourself, be good enough....We are not righteous, He is....We do not redeem ourselves, He does....These thoughts are contrary to what our world teaches us and also contrary to the attitude Jesus has in this story... everyone is not a winner and to "esteem" ourselves is pride

This pride is in direct opposition to what the Bible teaches....without Christ, we are DEAD!!!! This is the posture we must take and the attitude we must carry through life....Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe! This is not to say that God does not love us or that we do not have value to Him, but we are to live with a healthy understanding that without Him we are nothing...

2. Christ is our identity- It doesn't matter where you have been, what you have done, or what has been done to you. These things do not matter....what you have done or what has been done to you, but what Christ has done for you..

If you acknowledge your need for Jesus and are following Him...you have experienced the freedom of His salvation, and in His eyes you are clean....You are adopted into the family of God and are redeemed...you are loved

This is the problem with the first implication...many of us who are not steeped in pride but struggle with our identity, this is a tough pill to swallow. So we have this identity crisis...

Mark Driscoll says it this way: Identity determines biography...meaning who you think you are determines how you live....so....if you believe you are transformed in Christ as a loved, forgiven, regenerated, renewed, hopeful child of God....you WILL live differently

3. Jesus went through it- Something that is tough to understand but we MUST believe is the fact that Jesus was tempted and tested in every way like us. This is crucial because it gives us a hope that our God understands where we are and what we are going through.

¹⁷ Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested. Hebrews 2:17-18 NLT

The writer of Hebrews captures this so well as we get to see Jesus as the High Priest, who stands between us and the Father as a merciful and faithful go-between, who understands us and was willing to offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins...and the fact that He is able to help us when we are tested and tempted because He has gone through it...

¹⁵ This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most. Hebrews 4:15-16 NLT

In the same book in Chapter 4, the author tells us that not only does He understand our weaknesses but that He never sinned which qualifies Him to be the greatest High Priest and allows us to come boldly to God where we will receive not only the grace to be forgiven but also the grace to live a different life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion:

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert wilderness to be tested after an amazing spiritual experience. He was tempted and tested in every way and experienced physical hunger as well. You and I should be encouraged that He was obedient and humble and use Him as our example we need to:

Be ready-Luke's telling of this story makes it plain that the devil left Jesus until another opportune time presented itself. You and I need to always be prepared and always be preparing for times of testing and temptation. Do not mistake times of peace and victory as times to let our guard down...we need to continue to be in God's word and continue to commune with Him

Be filled-Jesus was full of the Spirit when He faced His testing...how much more should we be? We need to be living Spirit-filled, Spirit-led lives so because it is the Holy Spirit that empowers us to stand in the face of testing and temptation

Be humble-Like Jesus, we need to acknowledge our standing with the Father and submit to His testing of our faith...we need to allow ourselves, through the Spirit's leading, to be led into the wilderness of life to be tested...even after amazing spiritual times...so God can refine us and test and prove our lives...

COMMUNION

We want to remind our guests we have a gift for you at the Guest Table located in the Connection Center. Please stop by before you leave so that we can share with you this gift.