

2-2-25

## **Not in This Lifetime**

### **Luke 4: 1 – 13**

I want to introduce this message by addressing the men in our congregation. Men, I'm going to take you back to a place in your past where you may have suffered some PTSD – just giving you fair warning.

Do you remember the time when you were in middle school or high school or maybe even college and you really had eyes for a certain young lady?

She was the one that at the moment she came into view, it was like getting struck by lightning. Your palms got sweaty, and your knees practically buckled beneath you.

And, after many locker room halftime pep-talks, you finally psyched yourself up enough to muster up the courage to ask her out on a date, and her response was both swift and lethal ...

“Not in this lifetime.”

Maybe it didn't happen to you exactly how I described it, but you get the picture: The rejection was real. Your hopes and dreams were crushed. More than that, you were shot down, and it was going to take some time for you to regroup before charging up that hill again.

I feel like this is sort of what Jesus said to the devil when he was tempted and tested in the desert for forty straight days: Jesus said to the devil... “Not in this lifetime.”

Jesus, if you're the Son of God, use your superpowers – your divine power and position for your own personal gain.

Change these dusty inedible rocks into something useful: soft, tender, warmly baked bread to satisfy your extreme physical hunger.

No one would ever blame you for attending to your own needs. After all, you'll need every ounce of your physical strength to accomplish the impossible task your Father has set before you.

Satan, not in this lifetime is this ever going to happen.

What about the second temptation?

Jesus, if you are the Son of God, I got a better idea. Let's take a short cut. I know your Father has promised you that after you've suffered and then raised from the dead, you'll be seated at His right hand, and you'll have all the rule and authority and power and dominion. He will put all things under your feet, and you will be the ruler of all things, even the church.

But at what cost?

Separation from your Father?

The sins of the world piled high upon you, not to mention the punishment for all of humanity's sins.

The physical mutilation of your body?

Rejection and betrayal by those you love.

I've got an easier, better, much less painful way: Worship me. Pledge your allegiance to me and you get everything your Father has promised you without all the pain and suffering and much faster too.

Devil, Not in this lifetime will you ever see me bow down to you.

Okay, so you're set on going through with it. I admire your commitment and resolve.

Well, You're going to need a large following who will carry on your mission after you return to your Father, so here's what you can do: Throw yourself off the top of this temple. His army of angels will rush to save you in the blink of an eye so that you will not suffer even one itchy bitsy scratch.

And the best thing about it?

This overwhelming and unimaginable spectacle will surely draw thousands to your cause. No hassles of travelling from town to town to preach and to teach the truth. You'll dazzle them with just your signs and wonders, and that's all you'll need to gain their loyalty.

Satan, Never in this lifetime will I ever think that your plan is better than my Father's.

So, I think we clearly see the devil's temptations of Jesus:

Use your power and position for your own personal gain.

Take the short cut to reach your goal, disregarding the Father's will.

Make a spectacle of yourself to find significance, purpose, and popularity.

And I think we've also all experienced the knee-jerk reaction to these real tests and temptations in our own lives, and it comes out in our confessions:

Forgive me God for taking advantage of my position to serve myself and to make my life easier at the expense of others.

Forgive me God for looking for the loopholes so I can avoid the cost and inconvenience of being ethical and righteous and good.

Forgive me Lord when I feel I'm not getting enough attention or recognition, so I'll do something drastic to draw attention to myself just to satisfy my ego and fill the emptiness that torments me.

I think it's easy to apply God's word and say to ourselves, don't do these things. Don't fall to these temptations.

But it's so much harder to follow through and have victory over temptation. You know this, I know this, Luke, the author of this Gospel knows this and so does God. If temptation and testing were easy to resist, we wouldn't need Jesus.

So, I don't think the primary reason for Luke writing this account of Jesus in the desert for forty days is to exhort us to not sin. This is secondary – and sometimes when we read the Bible, we make the mistake of jumping to the application of Scripture before we really know what it means.

Sure, Luke wants us to avoid sin and run from temptation, but his greater purpose in writing about the temptation of Jesus in the desert is to help us be informed about the type of Savior Jesus is.

And when we know, this truth, avoiding sin might actually become a bit easier, because we won't just be trying to avoid sin. We'll be busy embracing the good. And Jesus is the source of all good.

I'm reminded of Jesus' response to the Pharisees when they tested him, demanding a miraculous sign from him. He said in Matthew 12:44 ...

*“When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself and they go in and live there. And the final condition is worse than the first.”*

The point being that it’s not good enough for us to just be concerned with removing evil from our lives. We must pursue good, and Jesus is the good. Focus on Jesus, be filled with His Holy Spirit, and there will be no room for the dark.

So, who is this savior Jesus? What kind of Messiah is He?

I think I can best answer this question by telling you what kind of Savior he isn’t. And I think maybe this is what Luke is trying to do for us. Through the telling of the temptation of Jesus, Luke is telling us that Jesus will not use any of the typical methods people use to gain success and win the favor of the people.

First, he will not be an economic Messiah who ministers solely to the bodily and social needs of the people. His plan isn’t to just go around and promise financial wealth and healing to anyone who asks.

Did he heal hundreds if not thousands of people? Yes.

Does he offer healing and physical wholeness in the next life? Of course.

But on Christ’s first visit to earth, this is not his main goal or objective. Jesus states his goal when he says in Luke 19:10, *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”*

Does God care about your physical ailments? Of course He does. Can He heal them in the blink of an eye? Yes, He has that power.

But will he? Maybe not in this life.

And these words can be difficult for you to hear right now, especially if you are lying in your bed with a terminal disease and you've been praying to God and it seems as though He's not listening and answering your prayers. Things are looking terribly bleak.

All I can say is God is not done with you yet. He will restore and heal your body at some future date, but you have to know that He's more interested in healing your soul and making sure that you will be with Him for all eternity.

Am I saying that God is some vengeful sadistic being who is somehow withholding good health from you until you believe in Him? No.

What I'm saying is that God knows what's most important for our present and our future lives. And He gives us this warning in Matthew 10:28: *"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."*

What's interesting about this extremely in-your-face, uncomfortable verse that makes us squirm is that it precedes some of the most comforting and beautiful verses in all of Scripture: *"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet none of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."*

So, Jesus is not an economic Messiah. He didn't even bother turning rocks into bread to satisfy his own physical needs.

Jesus is also not a sign-giving Messiah. Did Jesus do signs and wonders? Yes, and they were magnificent if I do say so myself. But he didn't do them to compel people to believe in Him. He didn't put on some theatrical display in order to show off his supernatural ability.

No, his signs and wonders are an invitation to us to investigate his true nature, and to corroborate the truth he was sharing. Many times, the Pharisees came to Him demanding a sign but he would not give them one because He knew they came with unbelief in their hearts and no sign was going to change this.

Of course, Jesus did tell them about the most significant sign he was going to perform, that being the sign of Jonah which predicted his own death and resurrection, but even this they would not believe.

Finally, Jesus was not a political Messiah. His ambitions were not to come to earth to captivate the kingdoms of the world by Caesar's methods – to conquer, capture and rule over nations against their own will. This truth was probably the most difficult truth for the Jewish nation to grasp. Their hopes and dreams were to throw off the chains of their political oppressors, but this wasn't going to happen in their lifetime.

So after hearing all this, you might be thinking to yourself ... So, what good is Jesus? What good is this Messiah?

He's not going to fix my bank account.

He's not going to fix my body.

He's not going to fix the government that seems so corrupt and incompetent.

What's he going to do?

Well, Maybe this last question was phrased incorrectly. It's not, "what's he going to do?" Maybe it should be ... "What has he already done for us?"

And the answer is that He is the Father's perfect servant, and he has done His Father's perfect will for our perfect future.

I refer you to Paul's words in Ephesians chapter 1 beginning in verse 3:

*"Praise be to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*

*For He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.*

*In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.*

*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.*

*And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he purposed in Christ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head.*



*In him we were also chosen having been predestined according to the plan of the one who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.*

*And you also were included in Christ, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory.”*

Jesus is God's servant doing it God's Way so that we could reap the unimaginable benefits of his eternal kingdom ...

If only we'll believe in this lifetime. Amen.