

Sunday, October 10, 2021 | It Is Written

Week 2 | Matthew 4:1-11 | "Self-centeredness VS God-centeredness."

Announcements:

- Trunk or Treat, October 23, 5-7PM, sign up in the hall.
 - Teen Activity, Saturday, Oct. 30, 7:30-9:30, Beachmont Corn Maze. Cost \$25.
 - We'll be voting on whether or not to approve this position on Sunday night, October 17. If you would like a copy of the job description, please email me at BHynre@GracePointeLife.com. We'll do communion that evening first, and then we'll move to the voting portion. You must be a member of Grace Pointe to participate in the vote. *Please note, since many of you had an opportunity to voice your questions—either last Sunday or to me in person— and in order to keep this meeting from going too long, there will be very little time for questions that evening.* So, should you have a question, you **must** reach out to the leadership or me for clarity before Oct. 17th. I would like for our leadership to hear each and every member of Grace Pointe and for our leadership to be given enough time to answer each question satisfactorily.
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Last week, before diving into Matthew 4, we had to understand the nature of God's word. After all, this whole series is called "It Is Written," and if you don't know how the Scriptures work, you will not understand how they can deliver you from temptation. But once you do understand the nature of the scriptures, victory over temptation is secured when the Christian is armed with a book, chapter, and verse.

Today, we'll finally get to the pivotal passage where the Devil himself tries to tempt the Son of God. As we work through this passage, keep in mind that this is one of the most unusual scenes in all of the NT. For instance, other than the Devil and Jesus, no one else is present to be an eye-witness of these events. Meaning, we can only assume that the account given to us here was first handed down by Jesus himself. What's more, there are only two places in the entire bible where the Devil makes an appearance to tempt someone: Mat. 4 and Gen. 3. In the latter, the Devil succeeded with Adam and Eve, whereas, here, the Devil will be thoroughly defeated by Jesus Christ.

Context:

- This scene is preceded by Jesus' baptism.

- There are several parallels that draw a connection between Jesus and the Exodus narrative (i.e., Jesus' baptism correlates to the parting of the Red Sea; Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness correlates to Israel's 40 years in the wilderness; Jesus's temptations correlates to Israel's temptations). If God tested the children of Israel, He would not hesitate to test the Son of God. Both "sons" were tempted, and where one failed, the other succeeded.¹

READ: Matthew 4:1-11 (ESV)

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil.

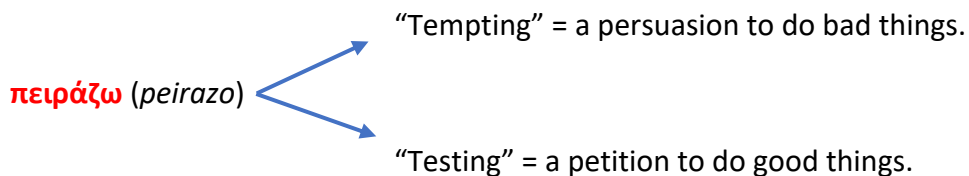
² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But he answered, "It is written," "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

⁵ Then the Devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple

⁶ and 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.'" ⁷ Jesus said to him, "Again it is written," "You shall 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 glory. ⁹ And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written," "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve." ¹¹ Then the Devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Now, before we break down that first temptation, we must first understand the difference between tempting and testing.



Evil—be it the kind that resides in our own hearts or the type which the Devil himself brings our way—tempts us to do bad things. Whereas God tests us to do good things. God never *tempts*

¹ Carson, D.A., *Matthew*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Revised Edition, Volume 9, Matthew & Mark, General Editors, Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland, (Grand Rapids; Zondervan Academic, 2010), p. 141.

us to do evil (cf. Ja. 1:13). But God does *test* us to reveal a truth (cf. Heb. 11:17; Deut. 8:2-5). Here, in Matthew 4, God wants us—the audience—to understand the truth of Jesus’ ministry.

Temptation #1 answers this question: *Is Jesus’ work on earth akin to some divine humanitarian sent only to meet our physical needs?* No.

Temptation #2 answers this question: *Is Jesus’ work on earth akin to some divine magician who only wants to entertain us with some grand spectacle?* No.

Temptation #3 answers this question: *Is Jesus’ work on earth akin to some divine dictator who only wants to rule the world?* No.

Yes, God’s testing often corresponds to evil’s tempting; but, never forget, the converse of that statement is true too (cf. Job 1:6-2:7). An opportunity to reveal the truth of God in your life presents itself every time sin comes knocking at our doors. In Matthew 4, the Devil’s tempting was meant to discredit Jesus; whereas, God’s testing was meant to credit Jesus.² Motive is what distinguishes “tempting” from “testing.”³

READ: Matthew 4:1-4 (ESV)

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil.

² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” ⁴ But he answered, “It is written, “‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Now, every week in this series, the sermon is going to be constructed in two parts. The first part will try to break down how exactly the Devil tempted Jesus. And the second part will try to break down how exactly Jesus resisted the Devil.

The Devil’s motive for living: self-centeredness.

The Devil’s initial temptation wasn’t to question Jesus’ identity. Satan, of all creatures, would know that Jesus was indeed the Son of God (cf. Matt. 8:38-34; Mar. 5:1-12, Lu. 4:31-37, 41). Instead, the Devil sought to undermine the implications of Jesus’ identity.⁴ Even in Greek, the

² Turner, David L., *Matthew*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2008), p. 126.

³ Ibid.

⁴ France, R.T., *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), p. 127.

phrase could just as easily be translated as “**Since** you are the Son of God” as “**If** you are the Son of God.”⁵

The Devil thought to point out the seeming contradiction between Jesus’ identity and Jesus’ current circumstances. After all, Jesus—who is the Son of God—was by himself in the wilderness for forty days without food. What kind of father would do that to their own son, let alone God? It’s almost as if the Devil was saying, “The Spirit led you to this very spot to be tempted by me? Given your circumstances, I doubt that you really are the Son of God. Do you see the disconnect? If you are the Son of God, why are you starving? If you are the Son of God, why are alone in the wilderness? Why don’t you prove it to me and, no doubt, to yourself, that you are the Son of God and turn these stones to bread?” The Devil sought to drive a wedge between the Son and the Father. He sought to sow distrust between these two, not unlike how he came to Eve all those years ago, and asked a simple but deadly question, “Hath God said...” (Gen. 3:1). The thrust of Satan’s argument ran something like this: “Is not suffering in this way supposed to be beneath someone of your supposed station?”

But Jesus didn’t need to prove anything to anyone, especially to the Devil. He knew who he was. The scene immediately preceding this one had already established his deity. Thus, Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness wasn’t meant to prove His deity; it was meant to prove his humanity. It was meant to prove that Jesus was not only the Son of God, he was also the Son of Man. And, as the perfect man, he would succeed where all the others who had come before had failed. Jesus knew the Scriptures, and he knew that the children of God will experience hunger, but, ultimately, God will feed his children with manna (cf. Ex. 16:14-16). And Jesus will not make the same mistakes that Israel made and be consumed by greed and selfishness (cf. Num. 11:1-15, 31-35).

Jesus’s motive for living: God-centeredness.

In rebuttal, Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 8:3 when he says, “**“It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”**” In fact, spoiler alert, each passage that Jesus quotes comes from Deuteronomy. Specifically, they correspond to something that the Israelites themselves had failed at when they were tempted. Meaning, “where Israel failed in the wilderness, Jesus succeeded in the wilderness.”⁶

Life gets its meaning not only from simply surviving but in serving a greater purpose. To truly live, we must, yes, eat bread; but we must also know that our lives have significance and

⁵ Turner (2008), p. 127-128.

⁶ Morris, Leon, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), p. 70.

meaning. And the only way to know if our lives have merit—that they really do matter—is to look to God’s word. Only through the Scriptures do we learn that we have been made in the image of God and to serve God.

Jesus’ purpose for coming to this earth was not to be served but to serve and give his life away as a ransom for all humanity (cf. Mat. 20:28). Turning stone to bread was not, in and of itself, sinful. After all, Jesus would use his powers ten chapters later to turn one boy's lunch into enough food to feed many thousands of people (cf. Matt. 14:13-21). The problem here, in Matthew 4, was that if Jesus used his power to make food from a bunch of rocks, it would not serve the purpose for which Jesus came to this earth. His life was a cup to be poured out for many; it was not a cup to be consumed for selfish reasons. And just like us, Jesus was dependent on the Father to provide for his “daily bread” (Mat. 6:11). And his “food” did not sustain Jesus; doing the will of God sustained Jesus (cf. Jn. 4:34).

What’s more, Jesus knows that he was “led by” the Spirit to this very place to be tested by God. To transform the composition of stone into a meal would be to thwart the purpose for which God had sent Jesus into the wilderness. Satan tried to use this fact as a means to undermine Jesus’ trust in the Father. But, amazingly, Jesus used that same fact to reinforce his trust in the Father. Jesus knew it was of God’s will that he should be tested. Jesus knew that it was of God’s will that he should be alone in the wilderness. Jesus knew it was of God’s will that he should feel the pangs of hunger. Far from being outside the favor of God—as Satan was implying—Jesus was exactly where God would have him. Satan was wrong that Jesus’ circumstances disproved his sonship. It was those very circumstances that proved that he was the very Son of God.

Interestingly, this same temptation would later be hurled at Jesus again. However, instead of it coming from the lips of Satan, it would be thrown in Jesus' face as he hung on the cross (cf. Mat. 27:39-44). To everyone standing by Jesus that day, the cross was proof that he wasn't the Son of God. But to Jesus, the cross was the confirmation of his sonship.

So, what’s the takeaway?

To truly live, we must not only eat that which sustains our physical life, but we must consume that which sustains our spiritual life: God’s word.

READ: John 6:25-40 (ESV)

²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” ²⁶ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷ Do not work for

the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.”²⁸ Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?”²⁹ Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”³⁰ So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?”³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”³² Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.³³ For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”³⁴ They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

³⁵ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

The problem with those who ate the loaves that Jesus provided was they wanted full bellies, not full belief. These people came to Him because they wanted Jesus to satisfy their physical hunger. The feeding of the five thousand wasn't proof that he could make bread; it was proof that he was the Bread of life. If only they realized that Jesus could satisfy a much deeper and desperate hunger. Just as He had great power to satisfy so many, so too does He have great power to save so many.

The Devil tempted Jesus into making bread when Jesus was the Bread. He has the power to save and to satisfy. And he can save and satisfy only because he finds his satisfaction in God alone. Like us, Jesus had to answer the question, “What’s more important, meeting our physical needs or meeting our spiritual needs?” The one who only seeks to fill his belly will undoubtedly have an empty life. This temptation answered for all time that Jesus cared far more for the word of God than the bread of this earth.

So, what’s the takeaway?

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Video Description

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TEXT: Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus' purpose for coming to this earth was not to be served but to serve and give his life away as a ransom for all humanity (cf. Mat. 20:28). Turning stone to bread was not, in and of itself, sinful. After all, Jesus would use his powers ten chapters later to turn one boy's lunch into enough food to feed many thousands of people (cf. Matt. 14:13-21). The problem here, in Matthew 4, was that if Jesus used his power to make food from a bunch of rocks, it would not serve the purpose for which Jesus came to this earth. His life was a cup to be poured out for many; it was not a cup to be consumed for selfish reasons. And just like us, Jesus was dependent on the Father to provide for his "daily bread" (Mat. 6:11). But like Jesus, our "food" ought to be to do the will of God who truly sustains us (cf. Jn. 4:34).

What's more important, meeting our physical needs or meeting our spiritual needs? The one who only seeks to fill his belly will undoubtedly have an empty life. **To truly live, we must not only eat that which sustains our physical life, but we must consume that which sustains our spiritual life: God's word.**

Pastor's manuscript can be found here: