

The Gospel of the Kingdom Pt 6

Matt 4:1-11

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

People misquote the Scriptures all the time. One of the things that I hear people say repeatedly is that God won't give us more than we can handle.

What the Bible actually says is this:

1 Cor 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

The fact is that God is constantly putting in situations that are beyond our abilities and our strength. He wants to stretch us and grow us. The only way that can happen is if He puts us in situations where the only way we can overcome them is by totally trusting Him and not our own abilities and strength.

God did the same with Jesus. He was led by the Spirit to a place where He was completely isolated and had zero resources. He was led by the Spirit specifically to be tempted by Satan.

Remember that He was fully man and subject to temptation.

Hear me clearly, it wouldn't be a temptation if there was no chance that He could give in to temptation.

2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

He was human, he was tired, he was hungry, and he was alone. There was a perfect storm of circumstances that made Him vulnerable to temptation.

1. Physical Temptation.

3 And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

Ever been on a diet? Ever had your stomach grumble? Now imagine how you would feel after 40 days of not eating.

Now the Devil has a good point. If Jesus was fully man and fully God, He had the power to turn stones into bread so that He could satiate His hunger. But that wasn't the point, was it? While on the surface this was a physical temptation, what it really was about was submission and dependance on the Father. It is really about trusting the Father.

John 5:19

"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing."

The past few weeks you have heard about the Prodigal and his older brother complaining and not trusting the Father. Last week you heard Lou talk about how we grumble and complain when God seems to be absent in the midst of our trials.

Do we truly trust God?

For 25 years I waited on God to fulfill His word to me regarding His calling on my life. I received His calling in 1972 through a prophetic word. I moved to upstate NY to go to college to study for the ministry and 6 years later, barely graduated. I then moved to Rochester, NY to prepare for the ministry and things went from bad to worse. I moved to Florida in 1985 resigned to working one secular job after another. I was told I wasn't a leader and that I wanted to much to be a pastor and was put on the back burner time after time.

It wasn't until I got fired from one more job that I finally surrendered to the Father's will and 2 weeks later I had a job at Metropolitan Ministries and finally in 1997 I became an Associate Pastor and I was ordained.

I didn't trust God and tried to make things happen myself and failed miserably.

" 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.'" (Deuteronomy 8:3)

Jesus trusted in God's word and was strengthened and nourished by that word. It wasn't until I yielded to His word that things started turning around.

2. Emotional Temptation

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.'"

Satan then goes to say to Jesus, ok, if you do trust Him, then throw yourself down and see if He comes through for you. Jesus was emotionally drained. He had gone from the pinnacle of hearing the Father affirm him as His son, to now being put in the wilderness without food for 40 days specifically to be tempted by Satan. How could God do this? Had He abandoned Him? Had He imagined that glorious moment?

7 Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" (Deuteronomy 5:16)

Jesus knew that in spite of what He was going through, that the Father was there with Him. He knew that while He could trust that the Father was there to save Him, He wouldn't put Him to the test unless it was the Father's will.

Mal 3:10

Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not

open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

The only place in Scripture where the Father says that it is ok to test Him is in His faithfulness to take care of His people.

3. Spiritual Temptation

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."

To understand this passage, we have to understand that God had given Satan dominion over the kingdoms of this world. He is called the "***prince of the power of the air***" (Ephesians 2:2) His hold on this earth is tenuous and ephemeral, but real. He was offering something that he did have authority over, but that authority was again, tenuous, and temporary.

Basically, what he was offering was a shortcut. Jesus knew the work and the suffering that was ahead of Him.

I have been in ministry for 53 years. There were many years of despair. None more than when my first marriage ended in divorce, and I destroyed the church I was leading. I have never felt so low in my entire life. All my friends turned against me. I have never felt so alone and like such a failure in my entire life. If I could have taken a short cut to arrive where I am now, would I have taken it?

The truth is that I am who I am now, because of all the I have endured and suffered. I can empathize with your pain when you are suffering, because I have been there.

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." (Deuteronomy 6:13)

- Read through Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Job, and the Psalms and you will find people just like you and me crying out to God in their suffering wondering where He has gone.
- Read as they enumerate the injustices they've suffered and the pain they've endured.
- Read their despair as they cry out to God.
- Read how they feel alone and abandoned.
- Read how frustrated they feel when they see no end in sight for their suffering.

And then, read how in the midst of it all, in the end they trust and praise God.

4. Resist the devil.

11a Then the devil left him,

Jesus had resisted the temptations of the enemy and the devil left him.

Does that mean that that was it? The devil did flee, but the Luke account tells us that ***"he departed from him until an opportune time. (Luke 4:13)***

James 4:7-8

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Conclusion

11b and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

This is one of two accounts in the Bible where it tells us that angels came and ministered to Jesus.

Both here and in the Garden at Gethsemane at Mount Olive, as He had poured out His heart to the Father and was facing the greatest trial of His life.

Luke 22:43-44

And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. 44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

So, what can we expect from God when we are going through our trials?

- We can expect Him to be by our side.
- We can expect Him to allow us to depend on Him.
- We can expect Him to feel our pain, our sorrow, our anger and our desperation.
- We can expect Him to strengthen us and come through for us.