

2023.03.26 - Temptation: The Urge To Be Proven

So What? The temptation to be popular undermines our dependance on God.

Feel What? Challenged

Now What? Where do you feel the strongest pull to prove yourself to others?

VISION CASTING

The mission of Mosaic Church is to unite people in the Way of Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

Matthew 4:1-11, NIV: Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “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.’” Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

This is the word of the Lord.

Can you imagine what it would be like to have all the power in the world at your fingertips? To not just have authority over the elements, but to create new possibilities?

You could end poverty. Your power could be used to close the wealth gap by creating money for the impoverished.

You could end world hunger. In just a snap, you could multiply Big Macs and bottomless cups of coffee could literally be a thing.

You could do all those things. But would you?

It could be that you would go down the *Bruce Almighty* path. In that movie, when he is given God's power, he becomes overwhelmed with prayer requests and just sets the email autoresponder to "Yes"—every gets what they want. Which includes things like everyone who asks winning the lottery. How generous. Except no one is happy with their 38 cent payout.

If you had God's power, do you think you would use it that way? Because do you know how strong the pull to use all it for your own benefit? Or even with mixed benefits?

Imagine, as you go through your day, the crushing obligation you would live under from all the empty stomachs crying out. Wars and civil unrest that you could get involved with. Now, imagine, that because of your power, you become the arbiter of who is worthy of your help. You're proud to be an American, so of course you favor our nation over the others. Or, maybe there's some lingering disillusionment, and you don't.

What about the brand you could build as "World's Most Powerful Person." You tell yourself you could help a lot more people if you could build a brand and market it around the world. Maybe monetize some content so the cash flows in for a change.

It's all for a good cause, right? At least, that's what you tell yourself.

And therein is the problem. We can tell ourselves all sorts of things about who we are and what our motivation is. Yet, there is a depth of deception and mixed motives that we have trouble getting to the bottom of.

Transition: Instead, we need someone to hold a mirror up to us to reveal the inner motivations which compel us.

SOLUTION

To begin his earthly ministry, Jesus met up with his relative, perhaps cousin, John, to be baptized. John the Baptist lived in a wilderness community proclaiming the new thing God was about to do, and Jesus was the fulfillment of his ministry. As John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River, from the sky above, the voice of God the Father thundered in affirmation, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." And the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus to anoint him for his ministry. Then, immediately after this, the Spirit guided him—some translations say drove him—further into the wilderness.

Matthew 4:1-4, NIV: Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter

came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

After Jesus was baptized, anointed by the Spirit, and affirmed by his Father, he fasted. And in that place of weakness and utter reliance on his Father, the devil came to tempt him. And in this first temptation, Jesus was challenged by Satan to prove himself. He was challenged to prove his relevance to this world by taking dusty stones and turning them into something that would quiet his hunger. That’s not a bad thing, right?

Well, the subtle lie buried in the twisted question was that Jesus was able to use his power for purposes that suit himself. Purposes that would not align with the bigger picture of God’s will—the mission for which Jesus was sent on.

These subtle lies are the same ones we face—to use whatever authority and influence for ourselves. It’s a never-ending cycle of staying relevant, remaining popular, and struggling to remain seen by others.

Whether we’re trying to stay up-to-date on the new cycle or whatever other hot take on celebrity gossip is happening. Or health fads influencers are trying to get us to follow. Trying to prove to yourself that you matter and that you’re better than the people you went to college with will just leave you emptier than before. Culture has a way of organizing us around a never-ending popularity contest.

Jesus, from the beginning was lacking in all these things. Born in a backwoods town, some saw him as conceived illegitimately. He remained quiet for 30 years, even being forgotten at least once by his parents at the Temple. His ministry was only 3 and a half years, and he was wrongfully condemned in a sham trial. When he died he was humiliated and was kept company only by his mother and Mary Magdalene.

This is not the tale of someone chasing popularity. Instead, he came to break the cycles of competing for attention.

Jesus also came to break the cycle of letdowns and betrayals, the deep inner wounding that cause us to want that attention in the first place.

He has come to shine the light of love of the Father so every place of brokenness and betrayal can be healed with divine love.

Transition: A few additional comments:

APPLICATION

1. The Devil & Spiritual Warfare

He is referred to as satan, the evil one, the destroyer, the deceiver, etc.

John Mark Comer, *Live No Lies*: “The devil is an immaterial but real intelligence at work in the world, with more power or influence than any other creature in the universe after God. He is the evil behind so much of the evil in our souls and society. For Jesus, the secular theories that attempt to explain evil as simply a lack of education, inadequate wealth redistribution, Marxist power analysis, or even the toxicity of religion gone bad all fall short of explaining reality. The only way to make sense of evil in all its malevolence—from large, global systems of evil, such as systemic racism or economic colonialism, to much smaller, human-scale evil, such as our inability to stop our self-destructive drinking or hold back biting comments toward our friends—is to see an animating force behind it, adding fuel to the proverbial fire. Dividing humanity against itself in a kind of societal suicide.”

He was created by good as a good part of creation, thought to be one of the most powerful angels, but because of his pride was cast out of heaven. He later lied to Adam and Even, introducing sin into our world and gaining authority of it to spread evil and darkness.

Demonic temptations are like spiritual disinformation campaigns. The battle is one for truth—“You shall know the truth and the trust shall set you free.”

- Russia’s angle in the last election was to heighten the divide in America by fomenting discord to take the spotlight off of their country. The more enraged our country is at itself, the less likely we are to impose trade restrictions or other policies that hinder their progress.
- But did Russia create racial tension in America? Did they create the partisan divide between Republicans and Democrats? No, they simply enflamed the tension that already exists.

2. Sin & Personal Responsibility

Tim Keller: “When the Bible talks about sin it is not just referring to the bad things we do. It’s not just lying or lust or whatever the case may be—it is ignoring God in the world he has made; it’s rebelling against him by living without reverence to him. It’s saying, ‘I will decide exactly how I live my life.’ And Jesus says that is our main problem.”

Jesus withstood Satan, not as God, but as a human fully submitted to God. He did what Adam and Eve could not do, and thereby won back the keys of authority from Satan to have leadership over the cosmos.

Even though we exist in a world full of overlapping systems inviting us deeper into areas of sin, we still maintain our personal responsibility to follow Jesus and resist temptation.

3. **Joining The Resistance**

It's important to note first where the devil prodded: His identity. "If" you are the Son of God. There are colliding opinions about himself Jesus is immediately forced to deal with: The voice of his Father and the voice of his enemy. And this is no less for us today.

The most important question for us is the exact one Jesus posed to his early apprentices: "Who do you say that I am?" Because our culture is organized to undermine your identity in God. Is God as good as he says he is? Are we as messed up as Scripture says that we are?

James 4:7-8, NIV: Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.

Knowing who we are and the truth of Scripture

Transition:

INSPIRATION

Henri Nouwen, *In The Name Of Jesus*: "In our world of loneliness and despair, there is an enormous need for men and women who know the heart of God, a heart that forgives, cares, reaches out and wants to heal. In that heart there is no suspicion, no vindictiveness, no resentment, and not a tinge of hatred. It is a heart that wants only to give love and receive love in response. It is a heart that suffers immensely because it sees the magnitude of human pain and the great resistance to trusting the heart of God who wants to offer consolation and hope. ...Knowing God's heart means consistently, radically, and very concretely to announce and reveal that God is love and only love, and that every time fear, isolation, or despair begins to invade the human soul, this is not something that comes from God. This sounds very simple and maybe even trite, but very few people know that they are loved without any conditions or limits."

Transition:

CONCLUSION

Put This Into Practice:

- **Where do you feel the strongest pull to prove yourself to others?**

Next Week:

- Pastor Sarah Siders will teach us about Jesus' second temptation

Communion

Matthew 6:9-13, NIV: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”