

Matthew 4:1–11

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Preacher: David Helm

[0 : 01] Today, we have three readings, one from the Old Testament, the other from the New Testament, and then one from the Gospels.

Our Old Testament reading comes from Deuteronomy chapter 8, verses 1 through 5. Deuteronomy chapter 8, verses 1 through 5.

And it reads, Our reading from the New Testament comes from James chapter 1, verses 1 through 4.

And it reads, It comes from the book of Matthew chapter 4, verses 1 through 11.

And it reads,

[3 : 25] He said to him, All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me. Then Jesus said to him, Be gone, Satan. For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and him alone shall you serve.

Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came. Angels came and were ministering to him. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to you.

You may be seated. I've been looking at new cars lately.

Lisa and I own two, and taken together, their combined age is 21 or 22 years old. Don't worry, I'm not going to buy a new one just yet, but I've been looking.

And one thing I've seen in the arena of automobile marketing is this. Cars aren't considered road ready without being test driven.

[4 : 35] I like the way that sounds. Not ready without being test driven. Whatever the car might have to say about itself on its literature is not sufficient.

Whatever manufacturer or some partisan, in a sense, industry spokesperson may have to say about that car is not enough.

For the buyer, everything hinges on an independently run test drive, preferably under adverse circumstances, because they know, like you, that a car on the streets of Chicago is going to be under some duress.

All of this has me thinking about ourselves. Myself. I've been thinking about you this week. Road readiness.

And it's also got me thinking about Jesus. What might he have to offer? To this point, and if you're new here today, in about 30 seconds, I'm going to encapsulate where we've traveled in this gospel to this point.

[5 : 56] If you're new here today, you need to know that Matthew's gospel has attributed an enormous amount of road readiness to Jesus. I mean, just think back, peel it back to chapter one, verse one, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

He's attributing some massive amount of road readiness on those phrases, son of David. If you don't know David, he would have been the king of God's people.

And one in his line would be the king over all people. He hasn't even made an argument yet, but he's come to say, I'm writing about Jesus, son of David.

Not only David, but son of Abraham, because Abraham had this promise that somehow through someone that came through his family line was going to be not only king over God's people, but be a blessing to all people.

That's some serious road readiness. And Matthew's not alone. Just think of what Jesus said about himself last week.

[7 : 10] Pastor Nee had it for us there in chapter three. And in verse 15, Jesus answered, let it be so now for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.

And he explained to us that to fulfill all righteousness, Jesus was saying, I'm coming on the road of righteousness. When you see me and my characteristics, you are encountering righteousness. That is a massive claim of road readiness. And then he had the partisan voice from heaven. The industry standard who builds on what Matthew thinks and what Jesus says.

And there it is. We saw it right before we left off last week. This is my beloved son with whom I'm well pleased. I mean, this is massive. Some serious marketing on the basis of Matthew's work. Son of David. Son of Abraham. Way of righteousness. And then out of the skies. Not only David's son.

[8 : 16] Abraham's son. My son. Not only my son. My beloved son. And you and I read the literature. And we have to decide whether we're getting behind that wheel.

Are we going to give Jesus control? Am I going to buy him? But let's be honest.

To this point, we haven't observed anything that resembles an independent test drive. I mean, something conducted under adverse circumstances.

Until now. Until now. Take a look again at verses one and two. Then Jesus was led up by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry.

I bet he was. I have a hard time going from lunch to dinner. Four observations. Did you see what he wants to say? It's almost as though Matthew knows.

[9 : 22] Nobody's going to believe my book. Unless he holds up under adverse circumstances. Led out by the spirit.

Into the wilderness. For 40 days. To be tempted by the devil. Those are four independent clauses that carry significant weight.

And are they not an echo to what Milton read for us from Deuteronomy 8? Israel. God's people. Led out into the wilderness.

By the spirit. Under adverse circumstances. For 40 years. In their case. Not 40 days.

Evidently. I'm thinking. Two verses in. That Matthew wants you to think. That Jesus is repeating. The test drive.

[10 : 24] That his people initially. Failed. That there's something. The writer wants you to know. That Jesus is. Representatively.

Replaying. Something that went wrong. And off the rails. You do know that Israel. Was the first. To be called God's son. Taken out of.

Egypt. But now. That son. Unsuccessfully. Navigated their. Time of testing. And now. Jesus. If you are son.

Well. Let's see if you can. Hold up. Under. The weight of it all. Notice. The spirit's the one. That ordains the test. But it's the devil. That does all the dirty work.

That's what keeps me. From yelling at God. Some days. God. You may be leading me. Into something. But I know. Your. Heart.

[11 : 23] Is for my. Proving. What was it in Deuteronomy. Eight. He was. Testing you. That he might. Know that your heart. Is really there. When your.

Teachers. Give you a test. It's not so that. They want you to fail. It's so that they can. See your progress. And that you've stood firm. Under all that you've learned. And so.

We know that God. Doesn't tempt us. To do anything evil. We're carried away. By our own temptations. But. These temptations. Are nevertheless. Permitted by God.

To secure us. While from Satan's perspective. He's just trying to sever us. You ever feel like that. You're caught between heaven and hell. Between. God and Satan. My life is filled with stuff.

I'm being test driven. God's vantage point. Let me show you my son. My daughter. Satan's vantage point.

[12 : 20] Let me sever this thing off. As fast as I can. They'll buckle. And be on the side of the road. Before you know it. Let me see if I can impact.

Illustrate the impact. Of verses one and two. I'm thinking of glass. I'm thinking of glass. That's made strong. Or the way it's made strong.

And you all know. I'm not a scientist. Or a chemist. Or any of that stuff. So I have to look these things up. I don't speak from anything. That I know. Just what I've heard. On this point.

That there's something called. Tempering. You temper. You temper. Glass to make it strong. Like normal glass. Gonna break easy.

Tempered glass. Somehow there's a process. That made it stronger. Multiple times stronger. Than ordinary glass. I've been told. I've been told. That the way they do this.

[13:20] Is they heat the glass. To about 1200 degrees Fahrenheit. Until the very point. When the glass itself. Is undoing itself.

It's loosening. It's melting. And then immediately. When it hits that moment. Of almost destructive force. They just fire this thing up. With cold air.

And tighten all that stuff up again. And as soon as it's tight. Then they lay out more heat. And the more heat that comes. The loosening comes. The compression comes. And you do that three or four times.

This glass is stronger than ever. Think of it in the way of an athlete. Who's in a weight room. Who breaks down muscle. In order that muscle might be rebuilt.

It's this contraction. This expanding. This tempering. That's what's happening in one and two. Matthew's got great stuff to say about Jesus.

[14:15] But he wants you to know. He's got reason to say it. Because Jesus gets something done. By way of tempering.

Let me signpost the three. Bold process. Of tempered glass. In the wilderness. One.

Jesus is tested. Simply on the notion of getting whatever you think you need. Says the evil one.

Two. Doing whatever you please. Given that you are God's son.

Three. Grab hold of what you can. Because you are God's son. I'll slow it down. We'll walk it out. Tempered by the heat of provision.

Verses three and four. Take a look. Put your own eyes on it. And the tempter came to him and said. If you are the son of God. Command these stones to become loaves of bread.

[15:14] But he answered it as written. Man shall not live by bread alone. But by every word that comes from the mouth. Of God. Tempered by the heat. Of providing for himself.

Rather than trusting in God. For his daily. Bread. Bread. Interesting. That the wilderness is the place of the testing.

And that bread. Is the issue. Or the presenting issue in the testing. Because that's just a massive echo. Of Israel's own history. God calls them his son.

Delivers them from Egypt. Walks them out into the wilderness. And the very first thing is. How are we going to live out here? We got no bread.

Maybe we should go back. The issue is trust. For what you need today. It's no surprise that later. Jesus when he teaches us to pray.

[16:13] Will say. Lord. You know it. Come on. Give us. This day. Our daily bread. What? That is a stunning request.

That is massive request. That means that the son of God. Jesus himself. Was willing. To wait it out. And let the Lord supply. Rather than.

Provide on his own. Hand. I think of all the theft. That's going on in the city. I think of all the people. That are reaching. To get what they have.

Because they're not willing to trust. That God will provide. I think of the way it works. In my own life. I got to secure. Mine. And not only for today.

I got to secure mine. For a week. A month. Five years. By the way. When am I retiring? I got to secure mine. For 20 years. For 30 years. And there's nothing wrong.

[17:08] With good financial planning. But there's everything wrong. With a heart. That doesn't look to God. To provide. And that's what happened.

To Israel in the wilderness. God was basically saying. You know. I'm going to have you go without. For a while. So that you keep. Waiting on me. Jesus evidently.

Learned the lesson. He says. It's written. Didn't you read the book? Man shall not live by bread alone. But by every word. That comes from the mouth of God. That means that. If you trust God's word.

Even though you die. You might live. Even though you starve. You might be saved. Even though you end up. Laying down in the ground. You might.

Enter into an everlasting. Table of bounty. Quite something. I think what. He's.

[18:03] Subtly arguing. Is that Jesus. Is fulfilling something. On Israel's behalf. He's God's true son. He's standing. In their failed. Place.

That's why the temptation. Even comes the way it does. If you are the son of God. You think you're going to stand. For all Israel. Yeah.

I've. Failed this test. Come on now. You failed it too. And who among us.

Hasn't felt the strength. Of this kind of temptation. To abandon God. And get what we think. We need now. Our desires. For immediate. Satisfaction. Are some of the strongest.

Impulses. We experience. Bonhoeffer. Put it this way. It's a lengthy quote. So stay with it. In our members. By that he means.

[19:02] In our body. In our members. There's a slumbering. Inclination. Towards desire. Which is both sudden. And fierce. All at once. A secret. Smoldering. Fire. Is kindled. It makes no difference.

Whether it's sexual desire. Or ambition. Or vanity. Or desire for revenge. Or love of fame. And power. Or greed for money. At this moment. God is quite unreal to us. He loses all reality.

The only reality. Is the devil. Satan does not here. Fill us with hatred of God. But with forgetfulness. Of God. The questions. Present themselves. In particular situations.

To appease. Our desired. Is it not really. Permitted for me. To do this now. Expected of me. Here in my situation. To appease this desire. The tempter. Says Bonhoeffer.

Puts me in the privileged position. As he tried to put the hungry son of God. And it is here. That everything within me. Rises up against the word of God. Powers of the body.

[19:56] Powers of the mind. Powers of the will. Which were all held in obedience. Under the discipline of the word. Of which I believe. That I was the master. Make it clear to me. That I am no means master. Of them. All my powers.

Forsake me. Have you not been there? At your table. On your bed. Outside your door. Suddenly. Suddenly. Suddenly.

Seizing. Your own needs. Rather than trusting God. Is almost overwhelming. The second.

Test. That the heat. Of tempered glass. Is not. The heat of provision. It's the heat of. Presumption. Take a look at five through seven.

Then the devil took him to the holy city. And led him on a planet. To the pinnacle of the temple. And said to him. If you're the son of God. Throw yourself down. For it is written. He will command his angels concerning you. And on their hands.

[20:57] They will bear you up. Lest you strike your foot against a stone. And Jesus said to him. Again. It is written. You shall not put the Lord. Your God. To the test. Let me. Say that.

This is the cauldron. In a sense of doing whatever you please. Because you know you're God's child. Let me signpost that in two ways. The nature of the test.

In the irony of the temptation. The nature of the test. Is to take advantage of his privileged position. With the father. If you are the father. Then he's obligated to you. And if he's obligated to you.

As I read my Bible. Psalm 91 says. That he'll command his angels concerning you. And on their hands. They will bear you. And you will not strike your foot. So he takes them up to the pinnacle of the temple.

Probably in some wilderness like visionary experience. Rockefeller Chapel. The very height of it is 207 feet high. The pinnacle of Herod's temple was 150 feet high. He's up there.

[21:55] At the top. Just do that work. Like a flying squirrel on a mountainside. And God is obligated to do something for you. After all.

Are you not his son? Has he not made a promise? No. Would God abandon you in a self-initiated free fall?

I've got to be honest with you. All of your self-destructive behavior and mine. Those of us who are religiously inclined. And thinking that we're walking with God. And God is obligated to walk with us. Our self-destructive behavior in those moments. Thinking that God's got us. Fall right into this category. I see this a lot within Christian community.

Maybe because I see it within my own heart. The heart. The sin of presumption. Can I just put it like that? We rationalize what we want to do.

[23:00] Under the notion that I'm a child of God. My heavenly father is going to catch me. Unharmed. Yesterday I was asked to pray at a basketball game.

It was an alumni game. So all these guys were old and out of shape. I was smart enough not to wear my uniform. I'm not going on that side of the line anymore. But the coach said. Helm, why don't you come and pray before we do this?

And I thought, do I pray for everybody's safety? And I thought, no, I'm not doing that. I ruptured one Achilles at age 30 playing basketball. I ruptured the other one at age 40. God doesn't know these guys the next 30 minutes.

As they're playing up and down. They should be where I am in the stand. So I prayed, Lord, thank you for the chance to go start this game. I wasn't presuming, Lord, and keep us all safe.

Because I kept thinking that if some guy blows the knee out. He's going to look over me and think. You got no access to the father. The sin of presumption. Let me get it in your heart.

[24 : 03] There are times when you think you can go into free fall. Self-destructively. And it's all going to be all right. You can plummet for a bit.

You earned it, didn't you? You can indulge the appetites of the flesh. I can do whatever I want in this church for a bit.

I'm my own independent sonship self. And there's going to be grace for me before I hit the ground. Why? Because God told me it's all grace. Grace always wins.

The nature of that test is incredible. And we succumb to it routinely. Let me put it to you this way. When you and I trade on the commodity of sonship.

To convince ourselves that we're free to purchase the wares of this world. We think we can have heaven and earth. And I'm telling you.

[25 : 03] You can't. You know, it's funny. A lot of people here come in this morning. You're not Christians. You've been brought along. Or you've been just seeing that this thing's going on here.

And I know. Because I talked to some of you. And you're exploring the argument like a guy like Matthew is going to make. And you're kind of convinced.

I'm going to stay here and walk through this. To see if I actually want to buy Jesus. If I actually want to be behind the wheel of what he's doing. And you see this more clearly than the Christian community, don't you?

You're like, dude. I can't believe these people are hearing this for the first time. We see the hypocrisy within the church like you cannot believe. We see the sin of presumption on the headlines of all the major newspapers in our country.

And we see God won't put up with it forever. Because he's hammering you all. He's pruning you all. He's laying you out. Because you think you can be his kid and do what you want.

[26 : 04] Non-Christians see this. But there's also the insidious irony of the test. Not just the nature of it.

Did you notice the irony of it? Look again at that. Satan uses the Bible to get Jesus off the Bible. You might not see it in your text. But when Satan says he'll command his angels concerning you. And on their hands they'll bear you up. Lest you strike your foot against the stone. He's quoting Psalm 91.

But what's fascinating is a phrase in the middle of these verses that he omits. Because Psalm 91 actually has a little phrase between the first quote and the second quote.

It should actually follow and. And here's what it says. In one sense it's going to say very clearly in order to guard your ways.

[27 : 04] God is doing something for you in the moments when he is guarding your ways. But you're not free just to go on out and do this thing.

Let me put it to you this way. Anyone can take a verse of the Bible and spin it to their own advantage.

We can all take the Bible to do something with our life. Even though the Bible in all of its fullness would be opposed to it. It happens all the time.

Non-Christians do this all the time. Your Bible says that God is love and that we're all children of God. So therefore God if God is love and we're all children of God.

Then the syllogism follows that. Then God loves me regardless of whatever I do. I'm free to do whatever I want to do. That's not what the Bible says.

[28 : 06] You're leaving stuff out. The Bible says we're all God's children. So there can't be any judgment by God.

I'm going to do whatever I please. The sin of presumption. It pits the Bible against the Bible.

I'm going to put it real clear. Whether you're a Christian today or a non-Christian. Anytime you start to think I'm good because God's got me. Watch out. Third.

He's tempered not only by the heat of provision. The heat of presumption. But now this third breaking down. This melting of the glass. Before it's strong enough to enter into his work. This crucible of grabbing all you can. Tempered by the heat of power. Look at 8 to 10. Again the devil took him to a very high mountain. And showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their glory. [29:07] And he said to him. All these I'll give you. If you'll fall down and worship me. 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.

The test. The test is go up to a mountain. Show him the kingdoms of the world. And say you know. Satan's basically saying. I know I fell out of heaven. But this is now my domain. And if you've come here as God's son. I'll give it to you now. It's the sin of power. It's really the sin of shortcut. It's stealing for yourself now.

What isn't yet ready to be handed. There's a small detail in that text that I find fascinating. That's why I love reading the Bible slowly. And sometimes out loud. Verse 8. He showed them all the kingdoms of the world. And.

[30:04] Their glory. And their glory. Not just everything. But the accoutrements that come along with it.

I'm going to give you not only. Power. I'm going to give you notoriety. I'm going to give you weight. I'm going to give you stature. That's what glory means. I'm going to give you.

Ouch. Shining. That the stars have a glory. They. They have this. They have this. Thing that draws everyone's attention to it. I'm. I'm going to give you that too.

Says Satan. I'm going to give it all. Power. Fame. Notoriety. Control. Jesus response.

I love it. Be gone. Satan. He's like saying. I'm getting off this test track. I'm done. I'm good. I'm good. I'm a representative.

[31:10] I'm road ready. I can be trusted. I can be trusted. You can buy me. There's an unexpected surprise there at 11 and I'm getting ready to shut it down because I know you want Chinese food for lunch.

You're like we are having lunch. When does this guy get done? Verse 11. Then the devil left him and behold angels came and were ministering to him.

It's just so humorous reading the Bible sometimes. I mean the second temptation was to do something that God would be obligated to send the angels to him.

And after the third successful navigation, well, the angels do come and minister to him. Don't you love that?

What I'm trying to say is he was obedient through his sufferings and temptation and came out on the backside, not only tempered, but with ministerial assistance.

[32:18] It says they came and ministered to him. It's a liturgical term. You know, he says to him, you come worship me. And then the angels come and almost are in worshipful service to Jesus, the son.

It's quite stunning. This unexpected surprise that the one who would not presume upon God to send the angels now experiences the help of the angels.

The one who would not bow in service to Satan is now being served by the heavenly host. The one who would not worship and shortcut it all is the object of liturgical worship.

From all appearances, what he's trying to do in 11 verses is tell you and me, I know I've had an enormous amount of road readiness claims, but he's been test driven.

And in ways that you have all failed. He's up to the task of representing Israel, which means he's up to the task of rescuing us.

[33:22] Yeah. I hope this morning you're more open to buying what Matthew is selling. I'm done.

If you're not a Christian. And you're listening to me this morning and you're following the argument of the text. If, if you come to realize over the weeks in our presence, that there is going to be a day when you stand in the heated judgment of God, you are going to need a representative.

You're going to need one. I don't care how well you drive your life. That's what becoming a Christian is.

Basically, it's. Basically, it's. Dear God. And you say to yourself, that sounds strange to hear me saying this.

Dear God. May Jesus. May Jesus. Who Matthew tells me is your son. Take the wheel of my life.

[34 : 39] Because otherwise I'm going to be in a wreck when I see you face to face. That's how Christians are made.

If you're a Christian. You need to be reminded that you've got a representative. But are you proving your sonship by submitting to your own season of testing?

By following his example? He's testing you now. You got all this junk going on.

And guess what? Your heart is the point of the drill. And so. You need to know that the wilderness is God's roadway for readiness.

No heat. No holiness. No testing. No tempering. No wilderness. No refreshment. No obedience from you in the moment.

[35 : 45] There'll be no power for the mission. Like a strong tempered plate of glass is what the Lord wants his church to be like. He wants people to be like, man, I've been through it.

I've been through it. He's broken me down. Well, he almost broke me down. But he's stood me up. And I got to know he's going to do it again. Life is going to come with that expansion and contraction.

That by becoming a Christian doesn't mean I'm out from underneath those lights. Yeah. May the spirit who drove him into the wilderness.

Be the same spirit that empowers you. To be faithful to the word. Our heavenly father. Thank you for this gospel of Matthew.

This wonderful. Book about Jesus. Thank you this morning for reminding us that we're going to be test driven.

[36 : 50] Because you want us road ready. For some here this morning. Become their representative. Even before the service is out. Become their representative.

As they prepare to greet you face to face. For others may the power of the spirit. Be the power that enables us. To make progress in our own obedience.

In the hour of temptation. Lord simply put. May the usefulness. Our usefulness to you. Be somehow related.

To our steadfastness. In your word. Christ's name we pray. Amen. Amen.