

Matthew 4:1-4

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[0 : 00] Well, this summer we are in a series called Celebrating Life in the Gospel. And for four weeks we looked at the content of the gospel.

For another four weeks we looked at the implications of gospel life. And we're now in the midst of seven summer weeks on commitments made in light of the gospel.

Let me just share a few for those of you who have walked into this topical summer series today. We ought to be verbally proclaiming the gospel openly and often.

We looked at that. We ought to be visually promoting the gospel by the lives that we lead in holiness and in good deeds.

And we ought to be visibly producing the effects of the gospel through the activities, even as we looked at last week, justice and righteousness. These are commitments made in light of the gospel.

[1 : 14] And yet, even as we make our commitments, it must also be said, and this is where we'll center in today, our own commitment to the gospel will be proven time and time again.

There will be unpleasant, visceral seasons where God's pleasure is to put his people under the crucible of life in preparation for the gospel.

And I want you to know at the outset that that shouldn't come as any surprise. Think about it in terms of athletics. The Bears opened their preseason schedule last evening.

And we learned quickly, didn't we, that there is a need for preparation before the main event. Think of it in return in regard to education.

Those of you who are in the educational world, you are preparing for a life of service and ministry to the Lord. Think of it in terms of your vocation and the continuing education that is required for you to be useful.

[2 : 38] This idea that the commitments you make in life rest upon seasons of preparation is nothing new. It's especially true in the spiritual world.

No pain, no gain. I want to see the principle at work in the person and work of Jesus himself. If you have a Bible, I encourage you to turn to Matthew chapter 3.

Matthew chapter 3. And we're coming in on the heels contextually of Pastor Jay's sermon last week where God's people ought to be making a commitment to the gospel that involves justice and righteousness.

Well, look what happens to Jesus. Verse 15 of chapter 3. Jesus answered him. This is in regard to his baptism. Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.

He is actually living out his life under the banner of demonstrating that which is righteous.

[3 : 59] Or he gives himself to fulfilling righteousness. But what happens next? The fulfilling of all righteousness is followed by this intense testing that undergirds his usefulness.

I think that's where chapter 4 comes in. It's the temptation of Jesus. Remember this great experience that he had just had.

The closing verse of chapter 3. A voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.

And the beloved Son with whom God is well pleased, who is committing his life to righteousness in every respect, immediately enters into a season of intense testing and personal temptation.

Our text for today, Matthew 4, 1-4. Then, Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

[5 : 17] And after fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.

But he answered, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Two observations about this season of testing. First, and we've already hinted at it, Jesus' season of testing comes on the heels of great gospel blessing.

The voice from heaven, You are my Son with you. I am well pleased. Then, God's Son is sent away.

The one with whom he is well pleased is led into an unpleasant situation. The refreshing waters of baptism that were fulfilling righteousness are now all evaporated away.

[6 : 39] And all that remains are the arid deprivations of a wilderness. And remember, we're talking about Jesus here.

The Son of the living God. What are we to make of the fact that for Jesus, a season of testing is required to prove his usefulness in the world?

Two things here. It's incredibly important that we lay this out before we get into some of the applicatory, applicatory material. First, it's theologically significant, this whole principle.

For Jesus to present you and me before God as righteous, he must first prove himself to be the righteous one.

That's theologically important. There is no imputed righteousness. There is no, in a sense, declaration of being justified without Jesus first having his own righteousness intact and definite and tested and complete.

[8 : 11] So if we are to be sons of God, and remember the scriptures at this point, when I'm speaking of son, I mean in the sense of his heir, his child, the one who will receive all the bounty of heaven.

If we are to be sons of God, then Jesus, as God's Son, must first demonstrate himself to be circumspect in every respect.

It's theologically significant. So he emerges from the waters of baptism and to the voice from heaven that declares sonship and immediately that is proven, tested in a season of great duress.

Those 40 days, I'm sure, are nothing like anything you and I have ever undergone even when we've been under seasons of duress that have lasted years. For not only was it theologically significant, but you need to remember it is, in a sense, this whole picture here, he is, and uniquely so, representatively significant.

The language and idea that God's Son is being led through the wilderness in preparation for his righteous rule was first at work in Israel of old.

[9 : 37] And where Israel failed their season of testing in the wilderness that eventually led to 40 years of waiting, this one, God's Son, represents all of them.

And so, the milieu of the text, even its opening language where he is led into the wilderness, is to call the reader back that here is one who is representing the many.

Here is one who stands for the many. Here is one who finishes where they failed, who fulfills what they could not. He represents them.

And not only does he represent Israel, he represents all of us. In other words, in these short verses, Jesus is, in these 40 days, reenacting Israel's 40 years.

But he's doing so with perfect representative fullness. That he might be their advocate.

[10 : 48] so that when they commit their lives to a commitment of justice and righteousness and verbal proclamation and visible demonstrations, all those commitments are made in the righteousness of rags and it is only carried forward under the fullness of what he can do in the world based on what he has done in the world.

on a smaller scale and the second observation I want to make about this season of testing isn't just that it's followed on the heels of something wonderful, but on a smaller scale, similar seasons fall upon all of God's children.

Before your grand proclamation to verbally present the gospel would have any effect, before our self-proclaimed desire to live a life of good works that are committed to him, before we can produce any justice and righteousness, we go through wilderness seasons that prepare us for the gospel, that present us useful to the gospel, and this pattern rolls through life.

In other words, I'm telling you that your life will follow his. My grandparents used to sing that little verse, the Lord knows the way through the wilderness, all you have to do is follow, the Lord knows the way.

That's right, that's exactly what this text says for you and me. He knows the way, and all you have to do is follow.

[12:51] Let me show you from Hebrews 12 the import of this for your life. Hebrews 12, turn in your Bible to it, verses 7 through 11, if you turn your pages fast enough, they'll become a fan, and therefore every person ought to have a Bible in their hand.

Hebrews chapter 12, we see this same principle in play for the Christian. Verse 7, it is for discipline that you have to endure.

God is treating you as sons. for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have earthly fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the father of spirits and live? for they disciplined us for a short time, as it seemed best to them.

But he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

[14:25] do we want to have the peaceful fruit of righteousness? Do we want to fulfill all righteousness?

Is our heart where Jesus' heart was when he went into the waters for baptism, that all righteousness might be fulfilled? Well, for this to be true, we need to realize that righteousness is the fruit of unpleasant seasons of intense personal testing.

So we ask, anybody here going through such a season? Interestingly, it isn't just individuals that go through these seasons, seasons, it's God's people who go through these seasons.

Just as Jesus went through this on his own, he also represented all the people. Just as every person in the Hebrew scriptures who was trying to pursue God through faith went through it, so too God's people went through it.

If you were to ask me today, in the middle of August 2009, are there individuals in your congregation who are going through a season of testing that God is at work for their own good in hopes of producing within them the fruit of righteousness?

[16:02] I would say yes. I could recount privately dozens of stories where I so inclined to have various individuals here stand on their feet and reveal the season of testing.

But I want you to also know that the body must be prepared. And that Holy Trinity Church has represented in four congregations around the city or this south side congregation is presently undergoing a season of testing.

I believe that with all my heart. what will be yielded from this season we do not know.

Why we are in this season we cannot be sure. But if there is going to be gospel growth in this city within our own hearts and then within our neighborhood then it must be so.

So how do we handle these seasons of testing? I'm moving to the latter third of the message for those of you whose fan is failing.

[18:08] The nature of the temptation I'm only looking at the first today aren't you glad? The nature of the temptation will always fall along three lines as they're laid out in the three temptations here.

In other words these become banners for God's people that you could almost put things in your individual life under them. God will test you in regard to first of all material provision.

Provision. He will make you hungry for his good.

The second line of testing will always be along the second temptation here. What will you do with your place of privilege? Now not everyone here is in a place of privilege but it's sometimes one or others of you are.

Places of privilege are springboards for seasons of testing and particular temptation.

[19:25] The third one of course along the line of the third temptation the use of power. It will always be along these lines. God will lead you into a wilderness and make you go through arid deprivation that you might be proven and therefore useful.

God will grant you to elevate among your contemporaries with bountiful blessing that you might be proven and useful.

the fact that you have privilege is no indication that you will be useful for how many in the world are well situated in their field but failing to produce the fruit of righteousness in their work.

power. power. Well, remember that. It always falls along three lines.

The first step into the nature of temptation will be with Satan's approach. church. Chapter 4, verse 1, then Jesus was led into the spirit, led by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

[21 : 10] And after fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. In other words, the temptation we're speaking about today was one of material provision. And the tempter came to him, that's the initiating moment, and said to him, if you are the son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.

What a great connection to the previous verses, isn't it? That voice coming out of heaven, this is my beloved son, God's voice.

The very next speaker in the scriptures is the tempter, if you are God's son. There's a distinction here between what Satan is attempting to do and what God is testing his son concerning. Satan's probings are always in an effort to sever you, Christ here, from an abiding faith and trust in God's word.

That he might have you fall in the world. God is not probing you in hopes of severing you. God is proving you that your life might be sealed in him and then therefore useful.

[22 : 34] So the first step into the nature of the temptation will involve the evil one's approach. Bonhoeffer, God put it this way, in our members there is a slumbering inclination towards desire which is both sudden and fierce.

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.

Questions present themselves. Is what the flesh desires really sin in this case? I mean think of it in Jesus' respect. He's spent 40 days without food.

Is it really sinful to turn this stone into bread? Questions. Is it really not permitted to me? Yes, expected of me?

Now here in my particular situation to appease desire? Bonhoeffer goes on. The tempter puts me in a privileged position as he tried to put the hungry son of God in a privileged position.

[23 : 47] It is here that everything within me rises up against the word of God. Powers of the body, the mind, and the will which were 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 by no means master of them. All my powers forsake me, laments the psalmist. That's what happens in the nature of temptation.

And when that happens, you need to know that Satan is trying to sever you and God is trying to seal you. Calvin paraphrased Satan's words this way, quote, the meaning of the words, and the words meaning what I'm referring to in verse three, if you are the son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.

Calvin writes, the meaning of the words, therefore, is, quote, when you see that you are forsaken by God, you are driven of necessity to attend to yourself, provide them for yourself the food with which God does not provide you.

That's the nature of the evil one's world and word. When you see that you are forsaken by God.

[25 : 00] Was Jesus forsaken by God? Are you forsaken by God? Are you forsaken by God? Think of it. Think of this very room.

Think of your own need for personal finances. Think of your own need for a job, either to have one or to retain one. Think of your own need to pay the rent or the mortgage or the car.

Think of the students who are rising or falling psychologically on whether or not they receive their fellowship grant. Think of the young mothers in the congregation who are wondering if God will provide for the needs of their children physically and materially.

Think of the people in the congregation who have medical needs, who have no capacity anymore to provide for themselves. think of the ones who have parents and they're already wondering how will we get through this?

Satan's voice comes and he says, well, when God has forsaken you, you better get up and get it done on your own.

[26 : 31] how do we handle this? Think of the church, not just personally, think of the church.

Will we be here in a year? How do we know? Do we have the capacity among the people sitting in these pews to support the very work of even this congregational need?

we've been here 11 years but how do we know? Has God forsaken us? Think of the organizations this church has started.

Think of Hope for Chicago. Less resources now than we were able to allocate a year ago. Think of the Charles Simeon Trust.

over eight years of existence. Funded over half a million dollars to interns in this place that we might produce pastors around the world. Any real knowledge that it will exist two weeks from now?
[27 : 47] Now? how do we work and live and walk in the wilderness?

Well, it really is going to depend on where we're at in this scenario, but we'll see that in a moment. Now, first response, remind yourself of the reason that God puts you in the middle of it.

According to Hebrews 12, it was what? For your good. That you might bear fruit of righteousness. That echo of for your good, that you might bear fruit of righteousness, is actually connected to this text, not only in Hebrews 12, but all the way back.

Take a look at the context of the quote that Jesus uses in 4.3. Man shall not live by bread alone, but every word that comes from the mouth of God. Turn your fan back to Deuteronomy 8.

That's a nice good long run for you. This is the place that Jesus actually drew from. This is the context he was considering.

[29 : 08] the great message here by Moses, beginning in chapter 8, but I want you to see verse 2. He says, and you shall remember. And that's what I'm saying.

What is your first response in the nature of temptation? It is to remind yourself of why God has you in this. And look what he says, and you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these 40 years.

I love that phrase, the whole way. He doesn't say, and you shall remember that you got out of it. You shall remember that it came to an end. You shall remember that you now stand on the verge of the Jordan and are ready to go in and be useful.

No, remember the whole way. Well, what was the whole way? 40 years of arid deprivation. 40 years where God really made it work paycheck to paycheck. 40 years where you never had more than what was necessary for the day.

[30 : 23] And when the people thought I've got to garner more, that rotted and went away. Remember, God is doing something good.

Look at the verse goes on. Verse 2, you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God led you through these 40 years in the wilderness that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commands or not.

And he humbled you and let you hunger. And fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know.

I take that to mean you had no idea where that came from, did you? You looked out there and there was no way for that to happen. Parents couldn't have provided for you. Nobody you knew could have provided for you.

God did it. That he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. That's an amazing context, isn't it?

[31 : 38] He says, your clothing did not wear out on you. Your foot did not swell these forty years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you.

Wow, the connections are incredible. So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and fearing him. That might be the takeaway for the day.

In the midst of arid deprivation, what are you to do when you walk out through these doors? You are to keep the commandments of God and walk in ways that fear him and never believe that he has forsaken you.

For he has said, I will be with you. Verse seven, for the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks and water.

Oh, this sounds good, doesn't it? Makes you think the season might be over. Good land, a land of brooks and water, of fountains and springs, of air conditioning, of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees, pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper and you shall eat and be full and you shall bless the Lord your God and the good land he has given to you.

[32 : 56] Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes what I command you today lest when you have eaten and been full and have built good houses and live in them and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and your gold is multiplied that all your heart would be lifted up and you would forget that the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt out of the house of slavery who led you through the great

and terrible wilderness with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water who brought you water out of a flinty rock who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know that he might humble you and test you to do you good in the end beware lest you say in your heart my power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth you shall remember the Lord your God for it is he who gives you power to get wealth that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers as it is this day and if you forget the

Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish so where are we in a season of deprivation we the children of Israel who stand on the edge of the promised land who have gone through it and are ready and are proven and are prepared to be useful well if that's the case then we got nothing to fear but where are we are we later in the continuum are we just like before the exile the disobedience is risen before the throne for so long that deprivation becomes the pathway to death where you are is everything where we rightfully stand before

God is in complete need of grace is there not a pastor on staff or an elder who's been elected or a deacon who serves or a member who's committed or an attendee who's faithful whose very life doesn't in some measure warrant the displeasure of God rather than his mercy show me one I know not one could God faithfully fully finally move in ways that express his divine judgment and would he be right in doing so without a doubt but if we are sons by that I mean heirs and if the season is testing for the purpose of usefulness then it's good so we throw ourselves upon

God you throw yourself upon God for your rent for your food for your family you throw yourself upon God for the future for your health and though he slay thee yet I will trust in him remember what God is doing he is proving you sealing you preparing you to go into some big earthly world of name it and claim it no to enter into the gates of heaven where there you will eat and be satisfied forevermore realize finally that life ultimately rests through

God's word not through this bread of wonder like manna in the wilderness Charles Malick who was a Lebanese scholar ran the United Nations for a while I heard him speak when I was about 19 years old and this is what he said I speak to you as a Christian Jesus Christ is my Lord and God and Savior and song day and night I can live without food without drink without sleep without air but I cannot live without Jesus without him

[38 : 49] I would have perished long ago life is in Christ and it is fixed in his word and if everything in your world and mine go south to death itself yet shall we live a present season of testing a crucible or if you were sitting on my screen in porch a chrysalis we've got these little eggs that became caterpillars and caterpillars that eat milkweed and milkweed that disappears all too quickly under the voracious appetite of the hungry caterpillar and then eventually the caterpillar and we've got about seven of them now they make a chrysalis and they go up real high in the tool to get away from the predators

I was wondering in the early morning what is that guy thinking today he is encasing himself does he have any idea what he's coming out as does he have any idea that he's coming out does he have any idea that such beauty is on the other side of the chrysalis well if God protects him and sustains his life and births him and releases him then then we watch the monarch fly but it's in God's hands our heavenly father we have so many things to be thankful for today and we are reminded that as we make our commitments to you you are committed to us and that that will mean seasons of proving may we be faithful in Christ's name amen

I encourage you to stand through