

Our Champion Has Come!

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[0 : 00] All right, well this morning we're continuing our way through the Gospel of Luke. Luke has been laying out for us the story of Jesus. And last Sunday we took time to look at the genealogy of Jesus.

Luke put that right into his Gospel to show us the truth of who Jesus is. That he is descended from David and is the son of David, the Messiah.

But also to remind us of all the fulfillments of all the promises and covenants that have been made concerning the Messiah. Well now Luke is going to continue the story.

And if you remember before the genealogy of Jesus, Luke told us about Jesus' baptism. And how the Holy Spirit came down upon Jesus after he was baptized.

And that's key because now Luke's going to continue the story and show us what happens as a result. What's the first thing that happens now that the Spirit of God has come down upon Jesus?

[1 : 08] So we're in Luke chapter 4, starting in verse 1. So we're now moving from the Jordan where Jesus was baptized to the wilderness.

And this is maybe not the thing that we expect to read about first, now that the Holy Spirit has come upon Jesus. Luke says here that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit.

And that he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. So Jesus didn't just wander out there into the middle of nowhere for his own reasons.

God's Spirit in him led him out into the wilderness. And the other gospel writers are helpful here. What they say completes the picture for us a little bit.

Mark uses even stronger language here. I'm not sure why that's in there. Okay, here we go, yes. This is how Mark describes it in Mark chapter 1 verse 12.

[2 : 30] He says, At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness. And it's a very strong word here. It means to cast out or to drive out. Very intentional.

Very forceful word. And Matthew lets us know that there's a clear purpose here as well. Matthew 4 verse 1. Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

So God is very intentionally leading, sending, moving Jesus out into the wilderness for this purpose. So that he might be tempted or tested by the devil.

And we have to be clear here. It's not that God condones the tempting of the devil as though it were a good thing. Of course not. But it is a part of God's sovereign plan and purpose.

Not just to allow this to happen to Jesus, but even to send Jesus into it. The devil, of course, is evil. And he will seek to do evil to Jesus in the wilderness.

[3 : 35] And yet God intends to use even that to accomplish his good purposes. His plan is not to shield Jesus from all of this, but to strengthen Jesus as Jesus goes through it.

His plan is not to keep Jesus from it, but to exalt Jesus by it. And Luke starts by summarizing the whole ordeal here.

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where for 40 days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days and at the end of them was hungry.

The precise wording and grammar here of both Luke and Mark suggests that these 40 days were not just the lead up to being tempted by the devil, but that Jesus was in fact being tempted for the duration of these 40 days.

And then the particular temptations we're about to read of today seem to happen at the culmination, at the end of these 40 days. Mark lets us know that Jesus was with the wild animals, which seems to point to how he was truly alone and away from all other people out in the wild.

[4 : 54] And Luke says that Jesus ate nothing during these 40 days. Matthew uses the religious term to describe what Jesus was doing.

He was fasting for 40 days. That's from Matthew 4 verse 2. So it's not just that Jesus couldn't find any food out here. It's that he was deliberately choosing to fast, not to eat.

And at the end of these 40 days, Luke says that he was hungry. So the scene is set. And now Luke's going to tell us about three specific temptations, three instances of how the devil tempted Jesus.

The first one has to do with Jesus being hungry. Luke 4 verse 3. The devil said to him, If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.

What is the devil saying to Jesus with this? We notice that he's calling into question the very identity of Jesus. If you are the Son of God, are you really the Son of God?

[6 : 08] Or are you just another Son of Adam? It's as if the devil is trying to get Jesus to question, to doubt who he is.

Here's a way that you can prove it, says the devil. An ordinary man who's hungry couldn't do this, but if you are truly the Son of God, then you are no ordinary man.

You could speak to this stone on the ground, and it would become bread. Prove to me. Prove to yourself that you are indeed the Son of God.

The devil's nasty. Notice how he takes the very same tactic he took up with the first man, Adam, long ago in the garden. He tries to sow doubt.

Is that really what God said? Did God really say that? Is that really true? He loves to subtly and subversively suggest the possibility that we've misunderstood.

[7 : 19] He loves to cause us to doubt and to question what we simply accepted as true. What makes this temptation difficult or appealing?

Temptation's not really temptation unless there's some appeal to it, unless there's something desirable in it, whether it's good or bad or right or wrong. Without that, it wouldn't be tempting at all.

There'd be no power to it. So what makes this temptation difficult or appealing? What's the longest that you've ever gone without food?

What was that? Three days. Three days. Wow. Anybody longer than that? How was that? Four days. Four days. How was it?

Four days is a long time. Three days is a long time. I think my record was 30 hours for like a fundraiser. And I remember something of that feeling.

[8 : 28] But can you imagine not eating anything for 40 days? Over a month. What that would feel like. None of us even knows what that's like.

There you go. And that was just three days. The greatest physical hunger that any of us have ever felt is just a little smidgen of what Jesus would have felt in his body by the end of those 40 days.

So can you imagine that greatest feeling of hunger that you've had, times that by a lot, and then imagine hearing these words of the devil and seeing the stones right there on the ground.

And knowing that the devil is in a sense right, Jesus could turn the stone into bread.

He could exercise the power and authority that he has and just do it. Or, if he didn't do it by his own power or by the power of the Spirit, could he not simply call on God to do it for him?

[9 : 38] Do you remember what Jesus said in the Garden of Gethsemane when they arrested him? He told the disciples to put the swords away. And he said, Do you think that I cannot call on my Father?

And he will at once put at my disposal more than 12 legions of angels. So the devil is right. Jesus could, in this very moment, technically speaking, because of who he is and because of his unique relationship with the Father, he could simply end that roaring in his gut and make some food.

What is Jesus' response? Jesus answered, It is written, Man shall not live on bread alone. Amazing.

Jesus refuses the devil. But notice how he does it. This loaded and convoluted temptation, Jesus comes against it with one word of truth, which God spoke to man long ago in the days of Moses.

He quotes from the scriptures, Deuteronomy 8, verse 3. And we're going to just go back and look at that passage for a second. We'll read the verses before it.

[11 : 02] Deuteronomy 8, verses 1-3. And this is Moses talking to the Israelites. Long before this, Moses said to them, Be careful to follow every command I'm giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the Lord promised on oath to your ancestors.

Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known. He did this to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

So what does Jesus do here? He points the devil way, way, way, way back to the days when the people of Israel wandered through the wilderness for forty years. And back in Deuteronomy, Moses is explaining to the Israelites part of the purpose of God in leading them into the wilderness to wander for those years.

It was to humble them. It was because they were proud and stubborn and rebellious. It even says that God by leading them in the wilderness like this, it was God who caused them to hunger.

[12 : 36] Why? So that he could feed them with the manna. The manna was that miraculous provision of God. It was the white stuff that appeared on the ground every day except the Sabbath day.

and it was edible. It was something God did to provide for their needs for forty years. And there was a lesson in it.

God caused them to hunger so that he could provide this miraculous food for them to eat in order to teach them that the proper way for a man to live is in humble dependence on the Lord.

Looking to him, calling out to him, awaiting his reply and his daily provision. There's a deep lesson in this. It's that looking to God and depending on him is more important than even the most important of human needs.

it should be a higher priority on our list than even our daily food. And it's amazing. Jesus cites this one verse to the devil and it's enough to unravel the whole temptation and expose it for what it is.

[13 : 59] It's as if Jesus is saying to the devil, you're trying to get me to fail and falter in the same way the Israelites did long ago.

you're trying to get me to live by my own power not independence on God as every man ought to live. You're trying to get me to use my authority and power even my unique relationship with the father to call in a personal favor and alleviate my own hunger to serve myself but that's not right.

Greater than my need to eat is my need to live as a human being in complete dependence on God. Greater than my hunger for bread is my hunger to do the will of God.

I'm going to wait for the reply of his mouth to meet my needs. I won't do it. Jesus says all that to the devil by simply quoting the words of God which came through Moses thousands of years earlier.

It's amazing. where we failed all those years ago in the wilderness Jesus succeeds and he doesn't succeed by using his divine power or by leveraging that unique relationship with the father.

[15 : 22] He succeeds by refusing to use his divine power by refusing to leverage his unique relationship with the father. He overcomes this difficulty in the way that we are meant to overcome difficulty in complete dependence on God as a man.

Ironically this actually proves that he is the son of God even more than what the devil was suggesting. Jesus will do as a man what is right for men to do.

He will live not by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God and total dependence on him. Next Luke tells us about a second temptation in verse 5.

The devil led Jesus up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world and he said to him I will give you all their authority and splendor it has been given to me and I can give it to anyone to if you worship me it will all be yours Matthew specifies even further that the devil took him up to a very high mountain not just a place but a mountain and it's unclear just how the devil does this how does he get Jesus from down there in the wilderness to up on the mountain it doesn't say just that it happened however it happened the purpose of the devil here is to have Jesus look out gaze out upon all the kingdoms of the world and see the vast dominion that they cover and the splendor of all these kingdoms and then comes the devil's words

I will give all their authority all their dominion and splendor to you Jesus on one condition bow down and worship me much has been made of the devil's statement here the authority and the splendor of all these kingdoms has been given to me and I can give it to anyone I want to some have pointed out here that Jesus doesn't say otherwise and that therefore the devil really does have dominion over all the earth's kingdoms personally I would challenge that first of all it's a logical fallacy it's an argument from silence just because Jesus doesn't rebuke it immediately or correct it doesn't mean that it's true second there is a little bit of truth to this the devil has been given a measure of free reign temporarily but ownership no he cannot give the kingdoms of this world to

[18 : 30] Jesus because ultimately they do not belong to him and it's always been just a matter of time before the devil's free reign is up the Bible is clear from beginning to end God is the only true and rightful king over all the kingdoms of the earth he has dominion and authority over them all he always has and he always will and yet the devil speaks as though they belong to him I don't think so what makes this temptation difficult or appealing to Jesus well there's certainly no appeal to the condition that Jesus must bow down and worship the devil neither is there any unrighteous craving for power within Jesus such as men have had throughout history there's no greed within

Jesus no desire for great riches and so in my opinion if there's any difficulty or appeal to this it has to do with the fact that Jesus already is the rightful king of kings and lord of lords he already is the messiah he has come down from the heights of heaven he himself is the one who created all things and therefore he has the right to rule the nations the kingdoms of this world are the inheritance that God has promised to his chosen king even as far back as psalm chapter two that's prophesied and so if there's any appeal here it's that the devil is offering Jesus only what rightfully belongs to Jesus surely Jesus has in his heart even now the desire to bring justice to the nations the desire to bring that everlasting peace that we read the words of the prophets to make the wars cease to fix and renew what has been utterly corrupted and broken in this great dominion but the path to all of that the path to that throne for

Jesus according to the plan of God is through humbling himself to the point of death even death on a cross only then will he as the God man be exalted to the throne and given the name above every name perhaps there could be some longing in the heart of Jesus here to have a shortcut to have the throne that already belongs to him but without the suffering without the shame of the cross well how does Jesus respond Jesus answered it is written worship the Lord your God and serve him only even if it were possible to take a shortcut to the throne of all the earth bowing down to worship the devil is out of the question it's unthinkable it's the epitome of wickedness and unrighteousness think about this would

Jesus the one who created all things bow down on his face to one of his creatures not even to mention that the devil is a despicable corrupt!

wicked creature not a chance the Lord Yahweh alone is worthy of worship for my part says Jesus I will worship him as my God and you devil should too with a single verse of scripture Jesus exposes the utter treachery and vileness of what the devil desires for himself he says no you are not worthy of that worship only God only the Lord is and I will take the path the father has put before me to that throne even if it means humiliation and suffering just as with the first temptation there's an irony here you know if Jesus were corrupt as we are would he even be worthy of ruling over all the earth and yet by refusing

[23 : 14] Satan by upholding the worship of God alone by choosing the path of humiliation and suffering he proves that he is indeed worthy to rule over all the kingdoms of the earth he shows that he is truly good like none of us are Jesus has no price he would rather die than bow before anyone other than God it's amazing finally Luke tells us of a third temptation if you look at

Matthew's gospel you might notice there's a different order here most people think Matthew's is the chronological order and that Luke has adjusted it intentionally perhaps Luke has decided to save this one for last there is a sense in which it is the most devious and subtle temptation of all the devil is utterly nasty and despicable here he takes Jesus to a place Jesus loves he stands him up on the highest point the pinnacle of the temple and again he tries to cause Jesus to question who he is if you are the son of God throw yourself down and this time not only does Satan challenge Jesus to prove that he's the son of God but he throws in this nasty crafty subtle twist this time the devil quotes scripture to

Jesus God has said that he will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully God has said that they will lift you up so that you will not strike even your foot against a stone these are the words of Psalm 91 verse 11 and 12 cherished words of scripture words of poetry perhaps even a song that the Israelites knew very well and the Psalm is all about how God specially protects his people and cares for them how he keeps them from all harm he keeps disaster from even coming near them and so because of that there was a bit of a debate here it was often felt that if something bad did happen to someone well they must not have as they should have because if they had God wouldn't have let that calamity happen to them well now the devil cunning as he is turns these words against

Jesus or tries to if there's anyone who loves the Lord if there's anyone whom the Lord will protect and keep from all harm it's you if you are the son of God if you are the son of God he cannot he will not allow anything bad to happen to you he must he would command his angels to guard you were you to slip and fall from this height or even if you were to jump God has to keep his word right if you are his son he would have to keep even your foot from striking a stone on the ground what is it that makes this temptation difficult what's the appeal Jesus has already shown that he doesn't need to prove who he is to the devil so why is this one any different I think perhaps this could have been the most difficult temptation of all for

Jesus do you remember what Jesus said as a 12 year old boy the time that he stayed behind in Jerusalem where was he in the temple why because he longed to be in the house of his father this is the place Jesus loves to be this may have been emotionally confusing seeing with his eyes the place he loves to be feeling in his heart that nearness to the father which being in this place evokes and yet beside him the devil is whispering into his ear praying upon his human emotions it's not true you're not really the son of God that's something that you've deluded yourself with if you really are his son he will prove it he'll care for you like no other if you were to say jump from this height what could it hurt what harm would it do just jump throw yourself down he will save you if you are his son unless of course he was lying prove that he wasn't lying that his words long ago were not just empty and hollow promises this is so sinister so subtle the devil is not asking him to break the first and greatest commandment and bow down to worship him he's simply asking him to jump and show the truthfulness of God what could it hurt and in this moment we're not

[29 : 26] Jesus but we can imagine wouldn't you just love to just stick it to the devil once and for all and jump and prove it wouldn't you love to just put him in his place Jesus answered it is said do not put the Lord your God to the test what an awesome response again Jesus silences the devil and he refuses by simply quoting or in this case actually alluding to a verse of scripture this time it's Deuteronomy 6:16 what was the fault of the Israelites long ago in the wilderness it says back there that they put God to the test they questioned his goodness they questioned his faithfulness to keep his word it's as if Jesus is saying here that's what you're telling me to do here devil you're telling me to put

God's words to the test but that's wrong Jesus will not do what the Israelites did long ago in the wilderness and I think this is maybe one of the most amazing responses that Jesus ever gave think about all the ways that this statement applies it applies to Jesus the reason he won't jump is because jumping would be putting God to the test but isn't Jesus also making a statement about what the devil's trying to do right now do not put the Lord your God to the test the devil's trying to put God to the test Jesus is saying right to his face you shouldn't be doing this it's wrong and there may be even another layer here because who is Jesus as we'll come to see in many other places throughout the scriptures he's not only the son of man he is

Yahweh the Lord himself come down in human flesh could he be simply just rebuking the devil right to his face do not put the Lord your God to the test Jesus will not play the devil's games he needs to prove nothing to him where Israel failed long ago Jesus succeeds and it all shows that he really is the son of God when the devil had finished all this tempting he left Jesus until an opportune time the devil's not done with Jesus he isn't ready to give up just yet he's going to lurk he's going to watch he's going to wait he's going to look for another moment to strike another way to undo what God is doing in and through Jesus how does all this apply to us today it's quite common for people to look at this and the main conclusion that we come to is that

Jesus is our example for how to overcome temptation and so with whatever temptation we face let's do like he did and use the scriptures that we've memorized to fight and win now that's a legitimate application here 100% absolutely if Jesus used the scriptures to overcome temptation should we do it any different of course not God's word is our sword through which we can disarm the devil and stand firm and expose!

his crafty lies but I don't think that the main reason that Luke has put this in this account of Jesus is to give us an example to follow for when we're tempted I think the main reason Luke has included all of this in such detail is so that we can see that where we have failed Jesus succeeded!

[33 : 40] Jesus succeeded this passage is not mainly about us and how to fight sin and temptation this is all about Jesus and how he has overcome where we fail time and time again he did not I think Luke is exalting Jesus here I think he's trying to show us he is our champion he really is worthy to be our king he really is the son of God he really is the spotless perfect sinless lamb of God that can take away our sins and at the same time he is the lion of Judah whom the devil cannot corrupt or defeat as hard as he may try where Adam failed Jesus succeeded

Luke wants us to see that in Jesus our faith is well placed our allegiance is well placed he is the offspring of the woman who will crush the head of the serpent should we imitate Jesus here absolutely but not before we stop and acknowledge just who Jesus is not before we worship him for his ability to put the devil in his place these words give us great hope they should cause us to look ahead to the end of this world's story where there will be the great and final showdown between Jesus and the devil and here we see that our champion is undefeatable Jesus beat the devil as a man in dependence on God by the power of the spirit and he will beat the devil again when he comes in glory and exercises his full might

I hope it lifts your spirits today I got thinking about this do you know the story of David and Goliath the Israelites got so used to hearing those arrogant chants of Goliath he was huge he was strong his weapons were so big they probably wondered if they could even lift them and so what did the Israelites do they cowered in fear they did their best to hold the line as Goliath continued to demoralize them but God raised up a champion against Goliath the son of Jesse and it wasn't by strength or might that he defeated Goliath but by faith and the power of God and do you remember what happened that moment when David struck Goliath down it says the men of Israel and Judah surged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines this is how it can be even for all of us today because our champion has come not even the devil himself powerful fallen angel that he is can stand against

Jesus the victory is ours it's guaranteed we don't need to cower in fear we don't need to let the challenges of life or the temptations of the world or the insults of men lay heavy on us we can take courage we can rise up we can surge forward with a shout because our champion has come and not even the devil with all of his power and cunning can stand against him isn't that wonderful father in heaven we thank you for your son our champion I pray that you would help us fix our eyes on him with the things that we're going through right now whatever challenges they may be the devil loves to attack your people you've warned us that he's like a roaring lion prowling around seeking whom he may devour but you have already struck the crushing blow and one day you will put him in his place forever glory be to your name amen so