

# Jesus In The Wilderness

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Preacher: Mitch Sefton

[ 0:00 ] Well, Happy New Year, Church. I hope you've had a very happy and safe New Year celebration a couple days ago. Happy New Year. Now we can all be excited for the next couple of months where we get a chance to write the number 2025 anytime that we need to write the date on anything that we're writing it on.

I don't know if you guys are like that, but I know that's myself and it's just going to be a whole lot of fun to make that five of six. Oh, great. It's something to look forward to. After a couple months worth of doing that.

So hi, my name is Mitch Sefton. I am the youth pastor here at the First Christian Church. And it is truly a privilege for me to be able to share a message with you this morning as we begin our new series called Good News.

Last week, Pastor Ray had the opportunity to wrap up our series that we walked through during the Christmas season called Word Alive. It was a great opportunity for us to take a closer look at the story of the birth of Jesus from many different angles.

You see, last week he also took a look at the many different benchmarks that we look at here at the church to see what type of year that we have had here at FCC. You see, we looked at the number of new baptisms and the new believers that came into our church.

[ 1:09 ] We look at the number of people that have chosen to join our church and be members here. We look at the desire to the body of believers to spread the good news of the gospel. You see, we also looked at the amount of increase that we have had in community impact through Giveaway Sunday.

And then we discussed the number of people that we have that are diving deeper into the Word just outside of a normal Sunday morning worship service. You see, it's a true blessing to be a part of what God is doing here at the church and in our community and across the globe through you all and through this body of believers.

You see, today as I dive into the message, I wanted to take a look at what the words good news and what that really meant to some of our students in 220 Youth.

And for those of you that don't know, 220 Youth is our junior high and our senior high ministry. You see, these are some of what they thought when they heard the words good news and what that looked like in their lives.

I had one student tell me that they received good news when they had the opportunity to sit down with their coaching staff and it was shared with them that they were going to get the privilege of getting to dress on the varsity roster.

[ 2:19 ] You see, I had another of our students that said that the good news that they thought of was that they get to be the lead in their school musical. And then we had another student that received good news that they found out that they would get to be the president of the FCA at their high school.

And then we had another receive good news that their grandpa was cancer free. You see, we had another person that stated that they received information that when they were going to college, that they were going to be receiving a full ride scholarship to attend.

You see, good news can definitely come in a variety of ways. And over the next few months, we're going to be going to take a closer look at what the good news of the gospel of Jesus looks like.

As Pastor Ray said last week, we're going to be walking through the book of Luke up until Easter. You see, we just came out of a season where we were celebrating the birth of our Savior.

And now we're going to begin to look and walk through the life of Jesus and what we can learn from him as we discover the ultimate good news throughout this series.

[ 3 : 24 ] You see, today's main passage that we're going to be taking a look at and wrestling through comes from Luke chapter 4 and it comes from verses 1 through 13. You see, this is about when Jesus was tested in the wilderness.

And if you go back and you take a look at John the baptizer who prepared the way for Jesus, you'll remember that he prepared people for the Messiah in the wilderness. You see, he was calling them out of their life of sin in preparation of the coming ministry of Jesus.

You see, Ray spoke about this a while back when he talked about how John was a man that lived on locusts and wild honey. You see, Jesus, after his baptism, is led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tested and tempted, showing his own spiritual readiness to call those to the kingdom that John had been preparing the people for.

You see, through this passage, we're going to better understand the good news of how we can resist the temptation of Satan, that God, and that God will bless that.

And as we continue to prepare for that, and we strive for the purposes that he has for us here on this earth. You see, the book of Luke is one of the four gospels in the life of Jesus.

[ 4 : 40 ] It is the third book of the New Testament. So when you're looking through your Bible for this particular book, you have what's called the Old Testament that's in the first portion of the Bible that ends with the book of Malachi.

And then you have the beginning of what we call the New Testament. And that is the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and then John comes later. And those are the four gospels at the beginning of the New Testament.

But today, we're going to be camping out in the book of Luke. See, beginning with Luke being one of the gospels that teaches about the life of Jesus and that he is the son of God, Luke would have been someone that would have served alongside the apostle Paul.

He was a physician and gave a very orderly account of the events of the life of Christ. You see, I can only assume that with him being someone that was a physician, that he would have been someone that was very much had attention to detail.

And that is why we are able to get such an accurate account of the events of Jesus' life. He also wanted to be able to make sure that those reading these accounts would be able to better understand the prophecy that was foretold in the Old Testament about the life of Christ or the coming Messiah.

[ 5 : 52 ] You see, however, we must understand contextually what has been happening in the life of Jesus before this situation unfolds.

You see, right before Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, these were the major events that were happening, or this was the major event that was happening in the life of Christ as we prepare for the purpose of why he was brought to this earth and what he was coming to fulfill.

We go back to Luke 3, verses 21-23, where it says, When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove.

And a voice came from heaven, You are my Son, whom I love. With you I am well pleased. Now Jesus himself was about 30 years old when he began his ministry.

You see, this is a major event in the life of our Savior. Jesus, being about 30 years old at this point, his time had not yet come, and John the baptizer was sent to prepare the way for the coming one.

[ 7 : 03 ] And now is the time where Jesus is now going to start that ministry. You see, he had been preparing for this moment his entire life. This was when he would hit the accelerator on the purpose on why he had come to the earth.

You see, this event set in motion the next three years of ministry, leading to the death, the burial, and the resurrection of our Lord and Savior. For those of you who have chosen to make Jesus the Lord of your life here at FCC, you know that one of us on staff will sit down with you after you've given your confession of faith and walk forward through talking about the importance of the decision that you're making, and we'll go back to the scriptures, and we'll just take time to study together why this decision is so important.

You see, one part of that conversation that I usually have with my students in youth ministry that have chosen to make Jesus the Lord of their life is about how when we say yes to Jesus, it does not promise sunshine and butterflies for the rest of our life.

But what he does promise is that he will never leave you or forsake you, and that you will have a friend by your side through all times. You see, when we make the decision to follow Jesus, our name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

You see, now Satan has a new battle plan against you. He has now lost your soul, and his new goal is to make you the most ineffective follower of Christ that he can.

[ 8 : 32 ] He will do anything and everything he can to steer you away from the calling that the Lord has placed on your life. You see, he will work hard to derail you in any way, using things that you love and desires of the flesh that will cause you to fall.

You see, the passage that we're reading from today in Luke chapter 4 shares about how Jesus is preparing himself for the calling of his life, but also how Satan will do anything in his power to get in the way of that calling.

As many of you know, coaching sports has been a passion of mine for many, many years. We always talk about how one of the major factors in being successful as a team is the preparation that is put in before the game ever happens.

It is the work that you do early in the morning, after school, late in the evening, when no one is watching that allows you to truly be prepared when your big moment comes.

I think about the hours upon hours in the batting cage, taking ground balls, getting extra shots in, the time in the weight room, watching game film, scouting the opposing team, the nutrition that you put in your body, and all of the other aspects that make it so valuable before you ever get to game day.

[ 9 : 55 ] See, Robert Shuler has a quote that fits perfectly with this mentality, and that is that spectacular achievement is always preceded by unspectacular preparation.

You see, there is great value in what we do when no one is watching. That will prepare us for what our purpose is. You see, God has given each of us a purpose.

So the question that I want to start by asking you today is, what are you doing to prepare for that purpose? And are you answering the call? See, today we're going to be taking a look at what happened in the life of Christ as he was preparing for his ministry that has come and what he is going to be doing to grow closer to the Father to get himself ready for what is to come.

See, but before we read, I just want to take a moment to ask a blessing on the word that we're going to be reading today. So if you would, pray with me. God, we thank you for the blessing of this day.

And God, I just ask that your Holy Spirit reveal to us in your word what you called us to know. Father, we thank you for Jesus in his name. Amen. You see, Jesus, this coming from Luke 4, verses 1 through 13, and it starts in verse 1 saying, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for 40 days he was tempted by the devil.

[11:24] He ate nothing during these days. And at the end of them, he was hungry. The devil said to him, If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.

Jesus answered, It is written, man shall not live on bread alone. The devil led him to a high place and showed him in an instant all of 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 that I want to. If you worship me, it will be yours.

Jesus answered, It is written, worship the Lord your God and serve him only. And going into verse 9, it says, The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.

If you are the Son of God, he said, throw yourself down from here. For it is written, He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully. They will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

[12:32] Jesus answered, It is said, do not put the Lord your God to the test. When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

You see, there are so many parts of this that when just reading this passage at first glance, we may miss some of the details of the temptations that Satan used to try to lure Jesus away from God.

You see, the Spirit had led Jesus into the wilderness to be able to prepare for him the upcoming ministry that he was called to. There he was tempted by the devil.

And as the passage says, he did not eat for 40 days. Jesus chose to fast during this time. As he was preparing for the ministry that he had sent to this earth to do, he prepared through the spiritual discipline of fasting.

You see, the term fasting has been thrown around in many circles and it is important for us to understand the biblical meaning of fasting. Right now, especially in the new year, you'll probably hear the word fast or fasting in a new diet craze or something that some doctor or nutritionist says is beneficial to your body.

[13:50] And it very well may be true. But if there is not a spiritual aspect to your fasting, it is not the same as what we're talking about as we speak of what Jesus is doing here.

You see, the fasting that Jesus is doing comes from the Greek word nestia, which is in the abstinence of food for religious or spiritual reasons.

When we look at what Jesus was doing, he was preparing himself for the upcoming ministry by fasting from food and relying strictly on the word of God to provide for his needs.

Matthew 4, 4 states in another account of his being tempted in the wilderness where it says, You see, every year when we take our high school students to CIY, which is Christ in Youth, it's the conference that we go to in the summer, we have the opportunity to take a challenge that comes in the form of what they have called a kingdom worker card.

You see, this is a challenge that is a choice that is carefully considered before you would ever say yes to taking a card. We take a moment to pray over these cards before our students make that choice if they're going to accept the challenge that's on the inside, but they don't know what it says until they've opened that particular card.

[15:10] You see, these can have a variety of different challenges on them, but all of which will stretch you in your faith in some way or another. Well, about five years ago, maybe six, something like that, I specifically remember a young lady making the commitment to take a kingdom worker card and not knowing what was going to be written on the inside of it.

As she opened that card, she received what I think is probably one of the hardest challenges for a high school student in today's society. She was to pick one day a week, and she would totally fast from any devices or device time.

It was a challenge that I am sure was really, really difficult for her at first. But as she chose to be faithful to what she had committed to, she ended up talking about how much her faith grew that year by putting her phone completely away for one entire day per week.

I tell you that story to say there are many things that we can fast from. You see, the main thing we have to think about, or that we do think about, is food. But when it's something in your life that you could give up for a season of your life that would allow you to grow closer in your walk with the Lord.

Those are also things that we can fast from. You see, we can't forget the purpose of why we are making this commitment. If it is not to deepen your walk with the Lord, it's just a worldly fast.

[16:32] You see, at the end of verse 2, we get a chance to see the humanity of Jesus himself. He is both fully man and fully God. And as we read, he is hungry at the end of his 40 days or throughout the 40-day fast because he had gone without food.

It is just like any of the rest of us in our humanity that when we have gone without food, we will become very hungry as well. I'm going to give you permission to do something here. After I ask this next question, I'm going to give you the liberty to point, to elbow, or maybe to look right at somebody that might fall into this trap.

Do you know someone that gets hangry? Oh, me? What? You know that feeling of how you act when you haven't had food for a while?

Well, I'm sure that many of you, like myself, you know of people that get this way, or maybe it's you. When they have a lack of food in their system, they're not the best version of themselves, I think we can say.

They may say something that we would not normally say or act in a way that maybe they would not normally act. But we can agree that without food, sometimes we are not our best.

[17:47] And sometimes we are at our weakest points. You see, going back to this passage, I want you to think about when the devil comes to tempt Jesus. You see, we've already established that him being fully man and that he was hungry, so we can also deduct that without food that Jesus probably was not the same strength that he would have been normally, physically.

You see, Satan will come back and attack when we are at our weak moments, or when we have something really big that's going on in our lives. You see, Satan desires to steal and to kill and to destroy.

We're talking about that in John 10:10. Satan tried to tempt Jesus, and Jesus was prepared to thwart off the evil schemes of the devil because of the preparation that he had put in to get to this point.

You see, he had been nourished by the words of God and had been sitting at the feet and worshiping for 40 days. If we take a look at the ways that Satan tried to tempt Jesus, he went right at him and his physical needs.

You see, you go into verses 3 and 4. You see, if Jesus would have succumbed to that particular temptation of food, he would have misused the power for personal gain, which would have gone against the very self-sacrificing life that he was called to live.

[ 19 : 28 ] See, Satan then tempts Jesus in verses 5 through 8. It says, You see, Jesus is tempted without having power and dominion over the earth, if only he will bow down to Satan.

You see, this one does not sound like something that maybe we would struggle with. You see, no one is ever taking me to a high place to look out and say, This could all be yours if you just worship me.

However, I'm guessing if you're like me, you probably have been tempted with the misusing of power or responsibility, maybe at your workplace or maybe in your home.

Maybe you felt tempted to feel superior to others because of the job that you hold, the family that you have, the amount of money that's in your bank account. Well, we may never have been tempted with power and dominion over the entire earth, but we have all been tempted with power and dominion over others.

So how do you respond to that? You see it all the time with celebrities and politicians, even church leaders, and their downfall because of the abuse of power.

[ 21 : 07 ] You see, God has called us to humbly serve and not fall trap to the temptation of power and dominion over others. The final temptation from Satan was for Jesus to prove himself to be fully man, but also fully God.

You see, the devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand at the highest point in the temple. If you are the son of God, he said, throw yourself down from here. For it is written, he will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully.

They will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. Jesus answered him, It is said, do not put the Lord your God to the test.

You see, the scariest part of this passage is that Satan uses scripture to try to get Jesus to fall into the temptation.

You see, Satan is taunting Jesus with a passage from the Old Testament coming from Psalm 91 verses 11 and 12. If you go back, you can take a look at these two side by side.

[ 22 : 19 ] It says, For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all of your ways. They will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

You see, this is not a case where the enemy doesn't know what he is doing. Satan knows the scriptures probably better than a lot of us do today. He knows them so well that he is able to twist them to be the stumbling block in our walk with the Lord.

See, I remember a song from when I was younger by a band by the name of Casting Crowns. Many of you probably know that band as well. But the song lyric has always stuck with me.

And it says, It's a slow fade when you give your heart away. You see, the problem that we have many times is that we don't know the scriptures well enough to be able to know the difference of when we are being tempted to stumble.

You see, this is why it is so important to study God's word and to be able to rebuke anything that goes against it. The part of all of this that I love the most is the example that Jesus gives of being tempted.

[ 23 : 32 ] But does not mean that he had to fold to the temptation. You see, the enemy will tempt you to try to lead you all the way to the finish line of sin.

But we have the opportunity to turn away from that temptation at any point. We must be bold. We must be decisive. And we must be prepared by arming ourselves with the very word of God.

And see, what a blessing it is to know that when we have our eyes fixed on Jesus, we are continually preparing ourselves by spending time with God through his holy word, through prayer, through worship, and through what we talked about earlier in fasting.

That he will lay before us the purpose he has for our lives and daily give us opportunities to bring honor and glory to him. You see, just as Christ in the wilderness, we will be equipped to dodge the temptations of Satan and direct our attention back to the Heavenly Father when we are put in these situations.

Now, friends, that is what I would consider good news. Have a great week, church.