

Lines Drawn

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[0 : 00] Let's pray together as we stand. Father, we thank you so much for the Holy Spirit.

We do believe in the Holy Spirit. And we believe that the Holy Spirit that you have given us is the only one that can open our eyes and our hearts to your truth.

And so we invite, we ask, Father, that you would, by your Spirit, open us to what you want to say. Grant us hearts to receive and to turn and to follow your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen. Well, please be seated. And do take out your pew Bibles and open them to the New Testament sections.

That's towards the back, page 57 and 58. Actually, we're looking this morning at the baptism of Jesus and the temptation of Jesus.

[1 : 02] And we're going to spend a little bit more time on the temptation. The temptation of Jesus has this theme right at the center of it of conflict.

Now, I don't know what comes to your mind when you think about conflict. But I will confess to you what comes to my mind when I think of conflict. And that is, I really, really don't like it at all.

I grew up, I'm the youngest of four boys. And my three elder brothers were all over 100 pounds heavier than I was. And that meant conflict avoidance was sheer survival.

And if anything, if conflict needed to happen, it had to be a strike hard, strike fast, and then run really fast to the bathroom and lock the door.

But the, you know, I really dislike conflict. Some people are kind of more wired for it, I think. I'm not one of those people. And I think, if I'm honest, part of the reason that I'm very uncomfortable with conflict is that there's part of me that thinks that it is an irregular part of life.

[2 : 17] Do you know what I mean by that? It's an idea that if I play my cards right, if I live my life smartly, that I will be able to avoid conflict and that I will be able to minimize the discomfort that I experience when conflict does arise.

Now, the passage this morning is a challenge to me on that point. Because in our passage, conflict is actually central to Jesus' mission.

And by implication, conflict is actually central and integral to the Christian life. And that is not something that's comfortable for me. It may not be comfortable for you.

Some of us may deal with it easier than others. But we've got to wrestle through this text and wrestle through the issue of conflict. So I want to look at Jesus' combat, his conflict with Satan in the wilderness and his temptation.

And then I want to consider his victory and what that means for you and I. Let's turn over to the temptation of Jesus first. This will be page 58.

[3 : 26] And look at chapter 4, verse 5. I'm going to jump into the middle temptation, the second temptation. I'm reading from verse 5. And the devil took him up, speaking of Jesus, The devil took Jesus up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

And he said to him, To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you then will worship me, it will all be yours.

And Jesus answered him, It is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve. Now, Satan is known for his subtlety.

And he's being really subtle here. We don't know exactly how it happened, but somehow Satan comes to Jesus and he gives him this vivid vision.

The vision of all the nations and all the kingdoms of the world. I expect Rome was in the vision. And perhaps Athens and its academic learning. Perhaps China.

[4 : 34] Maybe even India. And all their glory and power and might. And Satan reaches out his hand and he says, Jesus, I'll give this to you right now.

Just show me a little bit of respect. The word he uses for worship can also mean the respect you show someone who's a social superior to you. And I want you to see that this temptation is actually more than just a run-of-the-mill temptation to pride or ambition.

There's something more going on here. Satan's being really subtle. Because the father had already promised Jesus all the kingdoms of the world.

Let me show you what I mean. I'm going to push pause on the temptation for a moment. And we're going to push play on the baptism of Jesus. I want you to think about the baptism for just a second. And this will help make clear what Satan's up to on the temptation. You remember the image of Jesus' baptism. Jesus is baptized by John.

[5 : 40] The Holy Spirit comes upon him in the form of a dove. And a voice speaks from heaven. The voice is the voice of God the Father. And he says two things to Jesus.

And there are two things that are critically important and that launch Jesus off on his mission. He says, first of all, you are my son.

Now, we read in our first reading from Psalm chapter 2. And you may remember, we won't look at it right now. We won't turn there. But you may remember that God says almost precisely the same thing.

Let me read to you from Psalm chapter 2. The Lord said to me, listen. You are my son. And then the Father gives him an offer.

Ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession. Do you see what happens here?

[6 : 44] At Jesus' baptism, when he heard the Father say, you are my son, Jesus knew what Psalm 2 said. And he knew that that was an offer. That God the Father was going to give him all the kingdoms of the world.

But then God the Father said something else as well. He said, with you I am well pleased. And that doesn't come from Psalm 2.

That comes from the book of Isaiah. It actually comes from Isaiah chapter 42. Stay with me here. In Isaiah chapter 42, Isaiah talks about the servant of God through whom salvation will come to the world.

But here's the twist. In the book of Isaiah, salvation comes to the world through the servant of the Lord in suffering. In the baptism of Jesus, when God said, you are my son, and with you I am well pleased.

God the Father was saying, you are the king. You are the savior of the world. And you will save the world through suffering. Through the cross. Okay.

[7 : 56] Pause there. Let's go back to the temptation of Jesus. When Satan tempts Jesus with all the kingdoms of the world, he's trying to negotiate with Jesus.

He's trying to offer Jesus something of a shortcut. It goes something like this. Satan comes to Jesus and says, listen, Jesus, let's talk about this here. I know at your baptism God the Father said he will give you the nations as your heritage.

But I can do that for you too. I can sort this out. I can make you a king. I can give you glory and authority.

And if you go with my option, you don't have to do that suffering thing. You don't have to do the cross thing. I will give it to you right now.

There's no need for conflict. We can compromise here. We can do a win-win situation. We can walk off the lot. Two happy people. And so when Jesus is being tempted by Satan in this second temptation, there's a decision for Jesus.

[9 : 10] And the fundamental decision is who is he going to trust? Is he going to trust God and his plan? Or is he going to trust Satan and his?

If he chooses God's plan, then it means he will suffer. There will be conflict. He will suffer to the point of death. Death on the cross.

And through death though, he will receive a kingdom. The kingdom. And he will receive the salvation of all mankind.

If he goes with Satan's plan, Satan's plan is a shortcut and it is immediate and it is appealing and it is easy and it is utterly demonic.

And the reason it is demonic is because it leaves you and I in our sin. It leaves the world subject to Satan and it leaves us eternally condemned.

[10:10] Now that's the way situations always work. He always offers the immediate and he steals the eternal. And a very similar decision confronts each of us as disciples of Jesus.

When Jesus calls to us and calls us to follow him, he takes us on a path that leads ultimately to eternal peace and glory and joy. But it's not an easy path.

There is conflict in the Christian life. There is suffering in the Christian life. Jesus promises that we will be rejected by people we respect. There will be times in which we have to sacrifice.

And that does not sit very well with me. I don't like that very much if I'm honest. Because quite often, you know, most days of the week, I want all the goodies of religion without any of the difficulties of discipleship.

And the question that confronts us as disciples is, do we trust Christ enough to follow him through the valley of the shadow of death?

[11:24] Do we trust God that his plan for our life really is better than anything else that we can chart for ourselves? Jesus knew his answer.

Jesus knew who his father was. Jesus knew who to trust. And the moment Jesus rejected Satan's offer and chose the father's path, he set himself on a trajectory for the cross.

And all the other temptations, or the two other temptations in this passage, are kind of variations on a similar theme. In each case, Satan is trying to dissuade Jesus from the father's plan by trying to undermine his trust in God.

Take the first temptation as an example. Jesus fasts for 40 days. And understandably, he's hungry. He's starving.

And Satan takes the opportunity, as he does. And he comes to Jesus with a suggestion. He says, listen, Jesus, if you're God's son, why don't you act like it?

[12:37] Use your power to make these stones into bread and fulfill your immediate desire. Now, there's nothing wrong with making bread. Which is good.

I like bread. And there's nothing wrong with Jesus using his miraculous power to make bread. He'll do that for 5,000 people in a few chapters. The question is, will Jesus trust God in this moment? Will he trust God's word at the moment in which his physical desires and his physical needs are at their fever pitch? Do you remember Israel in the desert?

Do you remember Israel in the wilderness? Did you remember Israel in the wilderness? They come out of Egypt. They cross through the Red Sea. The Red Sea dramatically parts. They see the miraculous power of God.

But then they get hungry. Right? And as their hunger increases, their trust in God decreases. And it's there that Satan gets them.

[13:42] It's there that Satan gets them to grumble against God and eventually to fall into idolatry. And the same temptation comes for Jesus.

Here he is, he's hungry, but he chooses to trust in God and to trust in God's word. And he responds by quoting Deuteronomy 8.

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. That's the rest of the verse. Again, the question is, who's Jesus going to trust?

And the third temptation is similar. Satan takes him up on a pinnacle of the temple and invites him to throw himself off to see if God will catch him. And again, the question is, is Jesus going to trust God's word or test God's word?

Now, I want you to know something about these temptations. And I want you to know something about the strategy of Satan. Satan's objective here is not simply just to trip Jesus up in a couple mistakes.

[14:49] He has a bigger goal than that. His goal is to undermine God's plan, is to disqualify Jesus from pursuing God's plan.

And that's what Satan wants to do for you and me. You know, Satan is not like an elementary school brat in class who, you know, tried to get you to talk in class so you'd get in trouble.

Satan has bigger things in mind when he tempts you. Satan wants to undermine your trust so that he can neutralize your effectiveness in the kingdom of God.

See, Satan loves it when you and I give in to our greed and our pride and our lust and our gluttony and our bitterness. Because, above all, Satan hates God's glory.

And if he can catch us up in sin, he will distract us from pursuing the central objective of our lives. He will distract us from pursuing God's glory and enjoying him forever.

[16:00] Now, let's get back to the text because there's good news here for you and I who struggle. I want you to catch the thing that really should be obvious, but it's easy to forget or to just skim over because it's so clear and obvious.

And that is, Jesus wins. And that's remarkable because he's the first one that ever won. He's the only human being that has ever defeated Satan.

You remember Adam and Eve. They're created in the image and likeness of God. They are tempted. They fall. You remember Israel. They are delivered out of Egypt into the wilderness. They are tempted. They fall. They fall. And you and I, again and again, have been tempted and we fall. But not Jesus. He was tempted in every way as we are and yet without sin. He was victorious over Satan. His victory is our victory. I think that's part of the reason that Luke puts a genealogy in here.

[17:12] We had mercy on the reader. And we didn't make him read through the genealogy. But you know that Jesus' baptism comes and his temptation is here.

And right in between is the family tree of Jesus. And you notice that it goes all the way back to Adam. And part of the reason it goes all the way back to Adam is to tell us that Jesus represents not just himself, not just God, but Jesus represents all of humanity.

In the same way that Adam sinned and therefore all of us have followed him down the path of sin. And that's precisely what we'll see again and again in the gospel of Luke.

Jesus goes out from his temptation, proclaiming liberty to the captives because he has trampled and defeated the one who holds us captive.

And that means that when the enemy comes at your door, that means when the conflict in your Christian life begins to heat up, it means we have great hope.

[18:29] It means our only hope is to look to Jesus and to grasp the victory of Christ. It's the only strategy that works and it's the only strategy that cannot fail because it has already been entirely accomplished.

So I want to end with three ways that we appropriate the victory of Christ. Number one, we need to be full of the Holy Spirit. Number two, we need to be saturated in God's word.

And number three, we need to be immersed in Christ's body. First, full of the Holy Spirit. Later on, part of your Lord's Day reading, spend some time going back through the temptation.

And you'll notice that the Holy Spirit is with Jesus before he's tempted. He's with Jesus during his temptation. And the Holy Spirit is with Jesus after his temptation.

And Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit. And the same needs to be true of us. Right now, we confess in the Nicene Creed that Jesus sits at the Father's right hand. But he has poured out his Spirit upon us.

[19:42] And he strengthens us internally by his Spirit so that the victory he accomplished over Satan can be borne out within us. And the quickest way for us to fall and to fall victim to temptation and sin is for us to forget the great strength that Jesus has offered us by his Spirit.

I think that's part of the reason Paul in the book of Ephesians says again and again, be filled with the Spirit. Or later on, pray in the Spirit at all times.

We're to cultivate a prayer life that is continually saying, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Secondly, we need to be saturated in God's Word.

You notice every time the temptation comes to Jesus, he responds with a verse of Scripture. Now, that doesn't mean that Scripture is a kind of magical mantra, you know?

A Harry Potter kind of incantation that poofs temptation and evil into nothingness. That would be really nice. I wouldn't mind that. But that's not the way it works. Satan can use Scripture and misuse it.

[20:56] He does in our passage. But when we are saturated in God's Word, when we are continually rehearsing God's truth, we gain an ability to perceive and discern the truth from the lie.

And we're able to expose the lies of Satan and run towards truth. We need to be full of the Spirit, saturated in God's Word, and finally immersed in Christ's body.

This isn't borne out explicitly in the text, but it's affirmed through the rest of Scripture. That part of the way that Jesus pours out and applies his victory over sin and temptation and Satan to our lives is through each other.

It's part of the reason we gather each week. It's part of the reason we gather in Bible studies and home groups. It's part of the Bible. That through the continual encouragement of one another, we

are able to nurture each other and hold each other accountable as brothers and sisters in Christ. And there are times in which, in the Christian life, we get tripped up and trapped in temptation and sin, and there are times in which the only way to bring freedom and release to us is to go find a sister or a brother who is trustworthy and wise, confess what's going on, and seek prayer.

[22 : 22] And sometimes we have to walk together on issues for some time before it finally is resolved. But I know that that can be really scary. I know that from experience.

It's very scary to be that transparent and open. But it's part of being a soldier of Christ. And some of us may need to do that, even today or this week.

Friends, I mentioned at the beginning I really hate conflict. And that is true. And there are times in my Christian life where it seems as if it's just too hard. It shouldn't be this hard.

If I was really full of the Spirit, it would be easy or something like that. And that's just not the case. There are times in which it's hard. Don't be surprised when temptation comes. Don't be surprised by spiritual attack.

Don't be surprised at the difficulties of the Christian life. Turn your eyes and focus upon the crucified King.

[23 : 22] His victory, His glory, His power and strength. He is the one that will see us safely home. Through many dangers, toils and snares, we have already come.

To His grace that brought us safe thus far. And grace will lead us home. Let's pray together. Father. Father.

Father. Father, we are in the midst of conflict. And yet, you have not left us alone.

The conflict is more intense than we are strong. And yet, you have not left us alone. You have sent your Son.

And we praise you for this glorious plan to make Jesus the King of all through the cross. And so we come, desiring that you would pour out your Spirit upon us.

[24 : 30] That we may be strengthened with the strength of Christ. That we may be victorious in the victory of Christ. And we ask that you would take us safely home.

Where the victory will be completely and totally won. And the conflict behind us. Until that day, we look to you. Our only hope and strength. Amen.

Please remain kneeling. Our Father in Heaven, we come to you this morning with individual concerns, individual needs, hopes, thanksgivings and repentances.

We are sorry for our sins. And our greatest thanksgiving is, of course, the tremendous sacrifice of your Son on the cross which cleanses.

We thank you that through Jesus we enter your presence. And that through him we can come collectively as this body.

[25 : 48] Not merely as individuals. And pray for collective concerns. And so we pray for the work of your church worldwide.

We thank you for the many faithful preachings of your word. Which have occurred today. In so many different languages. And we ask that your Holy Spirit will turn people's hearts and minds. To listen to the life-giving gospel. And that they will not only hear it. But turn to you. We pray for the Lord. We pray as well for our many brothers and sisters throughout the world who face physical harm and torture because they follow Jesus Christ.

We pray especially for Christians in Nigeria facing persecution from Islamic militants. And for Christians in Orisa, India where many have been slaughtered in recent days in mistaken retribution. Father, we thank you for their witness to us. For their willingness to die rather than to forsake their faith. And we ask that you will shelter them from further harm.

[27 : 10] Lord, in your mercy. Amen. In the same vein, Lord, we pray for our troops in Afghanistan. We pray that you will shelter them from hurt.

And we ask for our brother, Matherin, that you will work in the hearts and minds of the refugee board. So it will grant his petition to stay in Canada. We ask for others in our congregation who are especially in need and for those who are sick.

Be with them and, if it is your will, restore them to good health. We pray especially for Manny, Wynne, Katrin, Michelle, Carolyn, Paul, and Chris.

And now, in a moment of quiet prayer, let us pray for those who are known to us individually and need our prayers. Lord, in your mercy.

Father, help us in our daily life as we face the brilliant temptations of Satan. Help us always to choose you, even though suffering might result, as it is done for our brothers and sisters elsewhere. [28 : 41] Father, may our trust be always in you, so that we will sacrifice what we should, when we should, when you ask us to.

But, Father, in all this, may we listen always to you and your word and live with our eyes fixed on Jesus. Fill us with your spirit.

Transform our lives. And we look forward, Father, to the time when we, transformed, shall see you face to face.

To that time of joy and worship. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Lord, in your mercy.