

A Jesus Reply
Matthew 4:1-11
February 26, 2023

We begin these Sunday's in Lent with the text where Jesus, after being baptized is led up by the Spirit, the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. We think of being tempted and usually is a temptation that has come upon us and we are given a choice to follow through with that temptation or to call on the Lord to help us through it. It usually doesn't involve much time but here is Jesus being led out into the wilderness for forty days.

What happens in those forty days? We learn from another of the disciples, Mark that He was among wild animals as He was out there. Wild animals, hunger to the point of death is what He was dealing with. 40 days is about how long a person can survive without food. It is probably an understatement that the text says He was hungry. Famished would be more like it. We think of Jesus on Maundy Thursday when He went with the disciples to the Mount of Olives and prayed for strength to go through with the Crucifixion the next day. He may have just had a good meal but then it was the temptation of the devil to not go through with what was required the next day.

The devil comes through with his temptations, temptations that tempt so many especially someone who once had all the power and glory like Jesus had and set it all aside or someone who had lost it for one reason or another.

First Satan goes to the most immediate temptation, the temptation Jesus had to deal with for all of those 40 days. Alone with wild animals all around Him thinking they might just get an easy meal with Jesus, by Himself, it must have been like Daniel in the lion's den. We know that He had closed the mouths of the Lions but now, He was to be tempted, tempted to use His power to keep them away but now He was living out a human life, life where it was He against the wilderness and all that it contained.

40 days of hunger and the temptation to use the power that was right there, within reach and yet He didn't. He would live through it all on His own or as He would tell the devil at the end of the 40 days His answer for the three temptations we have in the text for today.

First He is tempted to create food for Himself. We know later in His ministry He would turn a few loaves and fish into a meal for thousands. He had no problem with that, and it would have not been a problem this day either, except it would have meant giving in to that temptation, the temptation of the devil who started it all with the

temptation in the garden, in the beginning, which was the reason He came down to the face of the earth in the first place.

How does He answer the devil, even though it would have been so easy to have a fresh loaf of bread to munch on? Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 8:3 where Moses was reminding the Israelites how the Lord was with them, not 40 days but 40 years. He said: Deuteronomy 8:2-3 And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that He might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments 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, 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.

The people of Israel were tempted so many times during those 40 years and yet the Lord came through with water and food all along the way. Yes, they fell to temptation, time and time again but the Lord continued to come through even with the bread of angels.

So the devil thinks, if I can't get Him to drop His guard with food after 40 days, what else might tempt Him? If He wants to quote scripture, why not tempt Him to prove what scripture says. What scripture might do it? What about those who respond to the Lord by doing what He wants. What better temptation than to put His life in the Angel's hands as Psalm 91:11&12 states? They will protect Him as promised but the devil didn't take into account that this was taking it a little far. This was not just a temptation but a testing of God, trying to be the one to direct God as if you, a man could be a god directing God. Like walking out in front of an 18 wheeler and expecting God to send His guardian Angels to keep you from getting flattened on the pavement. Jesus responds as He should have, "you are not to put the Lord your God to the test."

The devil had tempted Jesus' stomach, His Word and now he comes up with something that Jesus had before He gave it up to come to the earth as a man. Jesus had created all the earth. It was perfect, without sin, with humans meant to live forever, spreading out over all His creation. He walked with them in the garden but then they took from the tree and fell into sin, tainting all creation with it, not only themselves and creation but all their offspring, including you and me as well.

Satan takes Jesus up on a very high mountain, maybe mount Everest, to show Him all the kingdoms of the world. Satan was promising all the kingdoms of the world to Him. Yes, there have been many humans who have thought they could conquer the

world. They all have failed and yet there always seems to be another one who wants to rule the world. I guess that is the ultimate for sinful man, be god himself.

Did Satan think He could catch Jesus at such a moment when He would call it quits and believe that Satan would no longer be the tempter and liar that he had always been after he turned against the God who made him? Jesus didn't take the bait and comes back with a quote from Deuteronomy 6:13 It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by His name you shall swear. It was repeated a little differently in 1Samuel 7:3 And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, "If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroath from among you and direct your heart to the Lord and serve Him only, and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."

Jesus answered with quotes from scripture. It is appropriate as Jesus said He was the Word made flesh. And in the beginning, all was created with a word, the Word, Jesus. Genesis tells of how God created. With each day the phrase, "Then God said." Is used. It was these Words of creation that brought it all about in just 6 days. It was these words that the Word was quoting back to Satan in response to the temptations the devil placed before Him.

Jesus dealt with the temptations of the devil with the scriptures taken from the Old Testament. It is interesting that He used them. Do you think that He would want us to do the same? Here is how Paul put it in His second letter to Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

"That the man of God may be complete." You mean to say that the scriptures make you complete? Without them, then are you incomplete? Jesus completed those 40 days of temptation with scripture. Scripture caused the devil to turn tail, not able tempt Jesus anymore at this time. Yes, Satan would tempt Jesus later but this time, when He was so vulnerable is the time we normally think of when we think of Satan tempting Jesus.

The Word of the Lord has power. It turned back Satan's scheme here and it is profitable for us to use in teaching, for response as Jesus did here with Satan, for correction when someone gets things wrong, and is to be used to train in righteousness.

Jesus came up with texts to address the devil. How are you at coming up with texts or summary of texts when dealing with others? What about explaining scripture to those who may have questions? If not, why not?

We have opportunities weekly to get into the scriptures and to learn of what they say and how they deal with the lives of people. No, none of us are Jesus who authored the scriptures but we have them to use to deal with the world we live in.

Too many think they can get the Word by osmosis it seems though. Group Bible study, daily Bible reading and study are there to equip a person to deal with those who the Lord puts in your path. What answers, or comments could be better than scripture itself? How many times do we wish we could quote a verse or use a verse in a situation where the scriptures have the answer?

We have been placed here on this earth to tell others of the hope we have. We have been given the scriptures to address the questions that others have as we visit with them, getting to know them and they us.

You have been saved through the water and the Word. Without the Word, who went to the cross to pay for your sins, you would still be in your sins, having no hope for life to come. It is to be used by you in your daily life lived out in the world the Lord has placed you in.

Thomas Cranmer, a contemporary of Martin Luther wrote this collect, this prayer you probably have all heard: God of inspiration, you caused all holy scriptures to be written for our instruction, grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast to the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ, who is alive with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever. Amen.

The scriptures that we all have copies of are to be used. In order to use them well, many additional helps are available for us to be trained in their use. The Holy Spirit will help in their understanding and use. He will not only help you use them but will work on the hearts who hear to create faith through that Word.

Jesus used the Word. He has given that same Word for us to use. He uses that Word through us to work in the lives of those He puts in our lives each day.