

**Text:** Matthew 4:1-11

**Theme:** Some Things Never Change

**Date:** March 5, 2017 (Lent 1)

In the Name of Christ Jesus, who defeated every temptation of the devil, Dear Christian Friends,

As we begin another Lenten season, we are privileged to follow our Savior on the journey that led him to the cross of Calvary. As we view him in the wilderness today, he reveals his human nature as true man who came to be the perfect substitute for sinners. But we also see him as the perfect Son of God who never sinned and yet bore our sin in his body and soul.

1839 Alphonse Karr, a French critic, journalist, and novelist, wrote in one of his many publications, "The more things change, the more they stay the same." Whether we are talking about fashions, the economy, or politics how true it is: The more things change, the more they stay the same. In the Bible, the book of Ecclesiastes, God's Word says, *"There is nothing new under the sun."* This proverb certainly holds true when it comes to the devil and his temptations. What temptations the devil used in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, he continues to use in our lives today. And when it came to Jesus in the wilderness, as we see in our sermon text, the devil was certainly up to his old tricks again. Today as we enter into the Lenten season of our worship life, our Savior wants us to be spiritually aware that when it comes to the devil and his temptations there is nothing new. His goal is still the same – to destroy God's kingdom and separate God's people for their heavenly Father. But our Savior also, and most importantly, wants to know and believe that when it comes to defeating the power of the devil there is no new weapon, no new strategy. The same Word of God that Jesus used to defeat the devil and his wicked ways is still the same powerful Word that always destroys the devil's evil endeavors yet today. While the temptations of the devil are still the same, the power to overcome them is also still the same – *Some Things Never Change*.

### **The First Temptation – Put earthly desires above spiritual needs**

Jesus had been led by the Spirit into the desert to defeat the devil's temptations. The days and weeks that led up to the confrontation between God's Son and God's Adversary were flavored with forty days and forty nights of fasting. Keeping in mind that Jesus is in every way a true human being, the hunger that his body experienced in the wilderness was as real for him as it would have been for us. Jesus, while he had the power, never used his divine power for purely earthly pleasures. Everything that Jesus did, taught a spiritual lesson to those watching. So what possible spiritual truth could Jesus have been teaching by refusing to eat something as simple as a piece of bread?

When the Bible says: [JESUS] WAS HUNGRY, that surely was an understatement. We certainly know from experience the drive that hunger produces in the human body to satisfy such a feeling. People will go to great lengths to satisfy their hunger. Satan was counting on such strong human emotions when he offered Jesus a sure bet solution to his hunger pains. **IF YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD, TELL THESE STONES TO BECOME BREAD.** Sounds innocent enough, doesn't it? What could possibly be sinful about eating some bread? Jesus was hungry. He had completed his fast. He had the power to turn a stone into bread. Who could possibly hold him guilty of wrong doing for making some bread to eat? But to do so would have been sin and Jesus knew it. This is why. God the Holy Spirit had led Jesus into the desert for the specific purpose of meeting and defeating the devil. And they very important spiritual work was not yet done. Jesus went without food for forty days for a reason; so that he could focus all of his attention on the Word of God and prepare to defeat the devil. And that's exactly what Jesus was going to do. He wasn't going to let earthly hunger or the devil's ways distract his from his spiritual purpose. It wasn't wrong for Jesus to eat; But just not now! Now it was time to focus on the spiritual matters at hand; for Jesus the spiritual was greater than the physical. With that thought in mind, Jesus rightfully replied to devil's deceptive ways: **MAN DOES NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT COMES FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.**

### ***Temptations never change***

Temptations never change. The same devil who tempted Jesus is the same devil who tempts us. The Bible describes the devil as one who has evil intent like a *roaring lion* looking to devour its prey. The Bible describes the devil as one who, when he speaks his *native language*, will always be speaking in lies. His native tongue is that of deception. The Greek word for devil is *diabolos*, from which we get our English word diabolical. The devil is evil, sneaky, cunning, craft, and tricky. So when he comes and tempts us in our lives, he masquerades as one who seems just as logical, just as harmless, just as innocent, as he did when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness.

How many times hasn't the devil ways led us to put earthly desires above and ahead of our spiritual needs? He tempts us to put material things ahead of God's Word. Not that it's wrong to have daily bread, or make the money or buy things. That's not Jesus' point. In fact, Jesus himself taught us to pray for our daily bread in the words of the Lord's Prayer. But it is wrong, it's sinful, it's spiritual self-destructing to put daily bread ahead of the Bread of life. **Jesus and his Word is the Bread of Life.** When it comes to our faith life Jesus wants us to ask *"What bread are we living on?"* Are we letting over-time pay on Sundays, out of town family/sporting events, or a desire to catch a little more sleep to get in the way of us feasting on the Bread of Life every week? Is our life more about eating three meals a day for seven days a week than it is about opening our Bible during that week and being fed with the Bread of Life? Are we more concerned about teaching our children how to throw a football or bounce a basketball than we are about teaching them the importance of family worship centered around the Word of God in church? What bread are we living on? Temptations never change. We don't have to be in a desert or wilderness to be tempted to turn stones into bread. The devil comes right in our homes and tempts us to put earthly desires ahead of spiritual needs. When we realize how easily and frequently we give in to the never changing

temptations of the devil, how comforting it is for us to hear again the powerful stand of our Savior against the devil's ways. Jesus said, **MAN DOES NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT COMES FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.** For all the times we have chosen our daily bread over the Bread of Life, how blessed are we to have a Savior who never did; a Savior who offered his perfect life for our imperfect life. All the daily bread in the world can't keep us alive forever and prevent us from dying. But the Bread of Life, Jesus, gives us what we truly need, eternal life.

### **The Second Temptation – Misuse God's Word**

But the devil wasn't ready to give up that easy. He had more tricks; more lies. **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. THEY WILL LIFT YOU UP IN THEIR HANDS, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'** Immediately after Jesus defeated the devil with the Word of God, the devil tried to use the very Word of God against Jesus. If he can be so bold against Jesus, just think of what he can do to us. Here the devil quoted Psalm 91 where God promises to send his holy angels to guard and protect us from all evil. But the devil, with his lies and deceptions, tries to twist and turn the Word of God to lead God's people away from their Lord. The devil took a beautiful Bible verse and used it in a way God never intended. While God promises to guard and protect his believers with his holy powerful angels, he never wants us to dare God or test God into keeping his promises by purposefully or recklessly putting ourselves into dangerous situations.

### ***Temptations never change***

The temptations of the devil never seem to change. The devil is an expert at twisting Scripture. Isn't it just like the devil to whisper that it's okay to speak evil of or hold a grudge against our spouse, our children, the people we work with, or the other students at school because after all doesn't God promise to forgive us all of our sins? Isn't it the twisted logic of the devil to say that it's okay for a man and women to live together before marriage because after all, then I could be a better steward of my money and give more in the offering plate. We don't have to go to a high point of the temple and jump down to put the Lord our God to the test. We tempt and test our God every day by putting ourselves in spiritually dangerous situations when we listen to the devil's lie.

### ***The Power of God's Word Never Changes***

Yet how comforting it is to know that our Savior saw through the deceptive ways of the devil and, with his knowledge of Scripture, was able to use Scripture to condemn the devil's ways. Jesus said, **IT IS ALSO WRITTEN, 'DO NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'** How imperative it is for us to know our Bibles so that we can discern between the devil's misuse and Jesus' proper use of God's Word. When we fail at knowing our Bible well enough or fail at using it well enough to defeat the devil, how blessed we are to have a Savior who not only knew but used the power of God's Word to put the devil in his proper place. Temptations never change, but neither does the power of the Word of God.

### **The Third Temptation – Do it Satan's Way**

Still the devil didn't give up on Jesus. If he could just get Jesus to fail at one point, he knew God's kingdom would be destroyed. In the words of our text we read. **AGAIN, THE DEVIL TOOK HIM TO A VERY HIGH MOUNTAIN AND SHOWED HIM ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD AND THEIR SPLENDOR. 'ALL THIS I WILL GIVE YOU,' HE SAID, 'IF YOU WILL BOW DOWN AND WORSHIP ME.'** The devil literally promised Jesus the world. All Jesus had to do is bow down to the devil and worship him, and everything a man could ever want would be his: money, power, status, earthly riches. In two thousand years the devil hasn't changed this temptation, either. He still tempts us to worship the things of the world we live in. Yet, God says, *"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. <sup>16</sup> For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. <sup>17</sup> The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. (1 Jn.2:15-17).*

We don't have to be on a high mountain to bend our knees to the devil. We sin against our Father in heaven every time we pick the world ahead of him; every time fear what the world thinks of us instead of following what our Lord teaches us, every time we talk, dress and live like the world around us instead of giving glory to our God with our whole being. Jesus knew how to perfectly give glory to his Father in heaven and he did it. He did it for the times when we have listen to the devil and done it his way instead of God's way. In our place Jesus defeated the devil's power with the power of God's holy Word when he said: **IT IS WRITTEN: 'WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'**

Time keeps passing on, but temptations never change. Ever since the time of Eden, Satan's seductive ways have remained the same. But there is also something else that never changes. *"Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever" (Heb. 13:8).* God didn't send Jesus to be our great moral example, but rather our perfect Substitute. Jesus fought the devil in our place. He came to do what the first man and woman and every man and woman after them has failed to do, and that is to defeat the devil's temptations. He perfectly obeyed God and perfectly resisted every temptation and perfectly used God's Word for every man, woman and child who has ever lived. And even though he never sinned and never gave in to temptation, he suffered the punishment that all of us deserve for falling for the devil's temptations. Through the Word of God the Holy Spirit promises to bless us with saving faith which gives us credit for the perfect life of Jesus. In Christ Jesus, God looks at you and me as people who has never sinned and never given into temptation. Jesus' victory over the devil is our victory. Amen