

THE CHAPEL OF CYPRESS COVE
SERMON- MESSAGE – FEBRUARY, 27, 2022

Title: "It Is Tempting...!"

Rev. Ted Althouse, Pastor

Texts: Luke 4:1-13

Chapel of Cypress Cove

"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. ³ The devil said to him, "If you are the only Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." ⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.' ⁵ The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ 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 I want to. ⁷ If you worship me, it will all be yours." ⁸ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.' ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; ¹¹ they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.' ¹² Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' ¹³ When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time."

This coming Wednesday we will begin the season of Lent which starts our walk with Jesus to the cross. Lent is a time when we personally should also reflect upon the direction of our own life. As we progress through life, we encounter many ups and downs and how we effectively manage these issues is in relationship to our devotion to Jesus Christ. During Jesus's earthly life he also encountered many personal issues involving temptation and he relied on Almighty God's direction. Each and every one of us is tempted in some manner every day. These temptations are primarily broken down into 2 basic forms: Indulge and Resist. If you want to be honest with yourself, each and every temptation you encounter will be either to indulge in something not beneficial to you...or...temptation to resist

something that is put before you. As an example, if you grew up in the social life of “church” and church activities, you will surely agree with me that temptation was put before us with all the delicious foods (especially deserts) at pot luck dinners. My love for deserts (and I’m sure shared by many others) is just one, somewhat relatively minor example, of temptation because excessive sweets can cause various negative health issues.

The word temptation is not a new word in anyone’s vocabulary. The dictionary definition of temptation is *‘the act of enticing or alluring one to do something often regarded as unwise or wrong’*. How often do we find ourselves in a situation like that? (Repeat definition) Some temptations can be very convincing (like delicious deserts)...while others are not as enticing and relatively minor (like running outside in the rain for fun). Some temptations can be good for us (tempted to go to bed early to get better rest), while others are not too good (eating/drinking too much). Some temptations are voluntary (skip exercising)...while others are involuntary (tempted to giggle loudly at a joke) . The important bottom-line thing to remember, is that we are constantly being tempted in some way or other. And this is because we are human...human by our very nature. But we must be wise in our assessments of

our human desires and be careful about the decisions we make in relationship to our temptations.

Even Jesus was tempted because of his own humanity by virtue of his human birth. But let's not forget that Jesus was also divine by virtue of his oneness with his Heavenly Father. We have recorded 3 main times when Jesus was tempted by Satan:

- 1. Told to turn Stones into Bread (John 6:26-31),
- 2. Told to jump from the Temple wall (John 2:18)
- 3. When Satan said he would give Jesus the Kingdoms of the World (John 6:15).

Of course, we know Jesus resisted these and all temptations in his life. Listen again to this scripture in Luke about Jesus's human nature and his divine nature: *"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, 'if you are the only son of God, tell this stone to become bread.'" (Luke 4:13)* It is interesting to learn from this scripture that Satan still remains eager to strike at anyone...especially when we are at our best and highest spiritual level. An old saying goes like this: *the richest ship is the pirates prize*. And a person who is full of God's Holy Spirit is spiritually rich...and if Satan

can capture that Holy Spirit filled person...then he has won a rich prize.

We know that Jesus had just been baptized in the Jordan River and was at a high spiritual level of his early ministry. And it was during this time that he was quickly put to the test of temptation by the devil. Satan was trying to capture the richest ship...the son of Almighty God. Never forget that if Satan can capture any person who is an example of good spiritual living, then he will more than likely capture the many people who look up to that person as their spiritual leader as well.

Another interesting fact in this scripture is that Christ was led into the desert to be tempted. Satan will attack anyone at any time and at any place...but it remains much easier for Satan to attack a person in non-spiritual environments. You know the places...I don't have to name them, do I?

Christians need to remain in the fellowship of the spiritually alive Christian environment where we find proper fortification against the attack of evil temptation. When we are alone and have let our Christian armor of protection down...then we are most vulnerable to evil influence. But when we are spiritually grounded and continue to fortify our spiritual being...then we have protection and the proper tools to ward off the attack of evil. Never forget that we can

ward off and resist the temptations of any sin in any and all environments (good or bad)...if we properly prepare ourselves through prayer and communion with Almighty God. And this sometimes takes patience and understanding, as God works his miracles of protection and deliverance. Begin to surround yourself with the great knowledge of God's word, his graces...and his people...hopefully before your temptation begins. This is exactly what Jesus did...he prayed and communed with God continually during those forty days in the desert. He prepared himself for Satan's attack...and we know that Jesus was not influenced by Satan. And this is our own perfect example of what to do when confronted by evil influence.

Satan said to Jesus during this time; *"If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."* (v3) Jesus was hungry (remember he was fasting for 40 days) and Satan figured that he would tempt Jesus with food. Many times, evil temptations come upon us when we are the weakest...and this is the leverage that Satan uses between our human flesh and our spiritual devotion to God. No matter how good our spiritual strength may be (or we think it might be)...we are never exempt from evil temptation.

In my counseling practice to DUI alcohol related clients years ago, I had come to see that those who have, or had, a

relatively good spiritual foundation/connection of some dimension, were more ready to accept their problem and move quicker toward recovery. I had witnessed substance abuse in the lives of some very good and well-respected spiritual people who finally overcame their temptation to further abuse through returning to Jesus Christ. Please never forget that no one is exempt from evil temptation...no one. But I repeat, it is the person who has a deep spiritual connection with Almighty God that usually can overcome that temptation quicker than one who does not have a deep and solid spiritual connection.

Listen to what Jesus said to Satan: *"it is written; man does not live on bread alone."* (v4) The meaning behind this statement is that God provides everything we need...everything that is required to overcome temptation is there for each of us and it is provided by Almighty God. Bread alone is not enough to survive living...we need more and God supplies all that we need before and after our temptation becomes a part of our life. We must do as Jesus did...live by faith...faith in Almighty God. Remember, God will provide us with all the strength to overcome all of our human temptations no matter how large or small.

Turning back to the scriptures, we see that Satan wasn't satisfied with just one temptation for Jesus, listen; "...so he

led him up to a high place” and said to Jesus *“I will give you authority (over all of this) if you worship me, it will all be yours.”* (v5-7) This is an example of temptation at its greatest! Satan will offer, as enticement, the greatest prize to anyone who will serve him. Nothing is too good to offer when it comes to Satan and his will to conquer the weakened Spirit. And you see this happening every day. The poor and disadvantaged, the alcoholic, the drug addict...anyone who is seeking a quick relief from pain and stress. To those who are the weakest...Satan offers the greatest gifts. (repeat) and let me tell you all...that sometimes it takes deep spiritual conviction and belief to overcome some of the temptations which Satan puts before you. But you can overcome any and all temptation if Almighty God is invited to participate in your life.

Jesus gave us the answer to overcoming temptation when he said to Satan; *“It is written; worship the Lord your God and serve him only.”* (v 8) I could preach an entire sermon on this one sentence alone. But in a few words, what Jesus is saying to us here is that we cannot...and must not, be tempted to worship and serve the delights that come from money and power (and all other temptations). Accepting temptation often leads to one revering (or providing more attention to) that temptation and allowing it to become a

vital part of life...and this is wrong. Jesus said that we must only worship and serve the Lord our God in heaven. Do not let anything become so important in your life that you abandon God and begin to follow the tempting Spirit of evil.

Now, I want us to quickly look at the last temptation which Jesus confronted. Listen; *“Then 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 (then) throw yourself down from here”* (v9) Satan knew that Jesus was the anointed son of God and also knew he was born of a human nature. So, he was hoping to find the one human weakness that might be in Jesus’s character...and if he could...Satan would humiliate him before his people and possibly lead his followers away from Jesus. And this is exactly what Satan is still trying to accomplish today with each of us...hoping to find that one human weakness that will take us away from God and into his legion. And you know, as well as I do, that this is happening all the time to those who are weak in spirit and faith.

So, what did Jesus do to counteract Satan’s temptation? He answered Satan wisely, listen; *“Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”*(v12) (repeat) We must never attempt to test God in anything that he directs us to do (repeat). God’s

word and his direction is firm and it is the inspiration which we need to follow daily. Almighty God is our mighty Sovereign Lord and no matter how much temptation is before us and no matter how difficult life may become...we must trust God and his Word and direction. Never tempt God in anything you do or say.

You know it as well as I do, that we are human in thought and action...we are human beings who are tempted often to follow the evil ways set before us by evil and powerful negative forces. Remember even Jesus was tempted by Satan because he was human and he was hungry. Jesus was tempted by Satan to have sovereign rule over all the nations of the world. But Jesus called on God and resisted all Satan's temptations. And so can each one of us!

Yes, each of us can resist any negative temptation set before us by Satan (just as Jesus did)...by calling upon Almighty God's strength...his power...his sovereignty...and we will also succeed...just as Jesus did. What is your temptation today...right now? What is Satan tempting you with now? Will you turn it over to God...right now!

As we go into a few moments of reflective personal prayer...will you identify your evil driven temptation (or temptations) and ask God to strengthen you...to receive his power...and you will succeed. Let us pray!

(Sing; Be still, My soul - #534)