

This morning, I am in the third week of a new sermon series that I've entitled "Meeting Jesus." I am making my way through Luke's account of the life of Jesus, looking at various interactions that people had with Jesus, in order to better understand what it means to know and follow Him. This morning, we are going to be in Luke 4:1-13, looking at Jesus and the devil.

Luke 4:1–13 - 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 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.

Four things we learn from this passage:

1) There is a devil whose goal is to separate you from God and destroy your life

Luke 4:1–12 - 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.

The devil, or Diabolos in Greek, which means slanderer or accuser, is a fallen angel who rebelled against God and brought a number of angels with him as to oppose God and His kingdom. In Hebrew, the name is Satan, which translates into English as adversary. The devil's goal is to overthrow the purposes of God. And in your life, his goal is to separate you from God, to destroy your life, to render you useless and ineffective for God's kingdom.

1 Peter 5:8 - Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Think of Jesus' interaction with Simon Peter before the crucifixion:

Luke 22:31–32 - “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat.³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

Satan wants to sift you like wheat, to take you out, to render you ineffective in your service to God. He is very clever and subtle and has any number of schemes and strategies to try to gain a foothold in your life.

2 Corinthians 2:10–11 - Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake,¹¹ in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Ephesians 4:26–27 - “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.

And in Luke 4, the devil tries to seduce Jesus away from the Father through various temptations. In the recovery movement, there is an acronym HALT – hungry, angry, lonely, tired – that warns us that we are more likely to relapse if we are experiencing any of those predicaments. That is when the enemy does his best work. And here is Jesus, hungry, lonely, tired, and tempted by the enemy to turn from God.

2) The devil is a liar who deceives, twists Scripture, and promises what he cannot deliver

One of the main traits of the devil is that he is a liar and deceiver. And he shows it here with Jesus, lying, twisting Scripture, and promising to give him what he can not deliver.

The message underlying these temptations is that you can not trust God. God does not have your best interest, and He can not be trusted. He will not take care of you, so you had better look out for yourself or, better yet, trust me, the devil, to give you what you are trying to achieve. And in the last temptation, he even takes a passage of Scripture, Psalm 91, and twists it, claiming that it means that if Jesus throws himself off the temple, God will catch him.

Luke 4:9-11 - 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.’”

And Jesus tells him that it is also written, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.” Do not manufacture situations to try to prove him to be true. The devil is a liar, a deceiver, who just wants to destroy you.

John 8:44 – “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

The devil is very subtle, promising you good things that you desire, but ultimately promising something that he can not deliver, like promising Jesus all the kingdoms of the world.

2 Corinthians 11:13–14 - For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ.¹⁴ And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.

And if you read between the lines of Satan’s temptations of Jesus, **he always seems to promise a shortcut to what it is you want, a way to glory without the pain and suffering.** I will give you all the kingdoms of the world, and you won’t have to suffer and die on the cross. I can give you an immediate following – just throw yourself down from the temple, God’s angels will catch you, and people will be amazed. You don’t need to build your following through sacrificial love and a brutal death. It calls to mind Jesus’ words:

Matthew 7:13–14 - “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

This is how the devil works. Tempting you with things that promise to be a shortcut to happiness, the easy road to comfort or glory or success. I can get you worldly wealth without having to work your way up at difficult jobs over many years; just take part in these illegal or unethical business dealings to build your wealth. Or better yet, have you tried FanDuel or the lottery? Are you feeling

anxious, depressed, beaten down by life? Don't work through your issues with God and with other people. Have you tried alcohol? Marijuana? Eating a gallon of ice cream? You'll feel better within the hour! Are you lonely? Longing for someone to love you? Don't work on achieving intimacy with a spouse or friend. Have you tried pornography? Or an AI boyfriend or girlfriend? They can give you just what you're looking for without all the drama and heartache of a real life person. Are you feeling angry, with some broken relationships? Don't try to talk it out with them, and definitely don't try to forgive. Have you tried yelling at them and slandering them to other people? That will bring you to a place of peace much faster. Got a hard assignment to do? Don't work at it – that will only build your brainpower and character. Just outsource it to AI and you'll be done in an instant so you can go entertain yourself on YouTube and Instagram! Are you feeling like a failure, an imposter? Don't go to God and find your identity as a beloved child of God! Just dive into your work, or a cause, or your looks or brains or parenting, or find something else in this world to gain your identity from. This is how the devil works. Tempting you with things that promise to be a shortcut to happiness, an easier road to comfort or glory or success. But he is a liar, a deceiver, and he will never deliver on his promises. His is the broad road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

The truth is that we have all been deceived by the enemy. And for many of us, as much as we might hear a sermon like this and swear that things will be different going forward, for many of us, the struggle continues. Thankfully:

3) Jesus is not only our example, but our Savior who defeated the devil on our behalf

Jesus is our model in fighting temptation, but he is much more than that. Jesus is obedient to God in a way that others are not. In this passage, there are echoes of both the Garden of Eden and Israel's 40 years of wandering in the wilderness before reaching the Promised Land. Remember that Adam could eat from any tree in the garden but one, while Jesus was denying himself food. Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent in the garden, who twisted what God said, causing Adam to doubt God's goodness and fail the test. But Jesus also encounters the serpent, the devil, who also twists what God says and tries to get Him to doubt God's goodness, but Jesus passes the test.

And Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness because of their rebellion and unbelief in God's promises and character. But Jesus succeeds in his 40 days in the

wilderness where Israel does not, trusting in God and resisting the devil, quoting three passages from their wilderness wanderings in order to prove His trust in God.

Jesus perfectly obeyed the Father, never sinning, never giving in to the devil, and then, by his death on the cross, took the punishment we deserve for our sins, for all the times we doubted God's goodness and gave in to the devil's temptation. He is not only our example; He is our Savior. Listen to this good news:

1 John 3:8 - The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

Hebrews 2:14–15 - Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Jesus would do this through his death on the cross:

John 12:31–33 - Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

Because of Jesus, the devil's defeat is certain, and his end will be eternal destruction:

Revelation 20:10 - And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

As resolute as you may be at fighting temptation, you will never perfectly succeed. But because Jesus is our Savior, our righteousness does not depend upon how well we do at fighting temptation. We are saved by grace, the undeserved gift of God through Jesus Christ, and not by works. But here's the thing: seeing Jesus die for you, to take the punishment that you deserve, changes you, and it changes your relationship to sin and temptation.

4) Fight temptation with faith in Jesus, with the Word, and with others

If he loves you that much, then guess what – there is nothing the devil can offer you that can compare to what God has to give you.

Romans 8:31–32 - What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

When you know His love, that He gave His Son, you can resist temptation because there is NOTHING the devil can offer that can top what God has to offer. The devil is a liar, and he will not fulfill his promises, but God is true to His Word. Everything he gives will not only disappoint, but will destroy in the end.

John 10:10 – “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

Trust that God is good. He has proved it at the cross. The more your heart is convinced of God’s goodness, the less susceptible you will be to the lies of the enemy. You know that he is a deceiver who has only come to destroy your life. So resist him and trust in God!

1 Peter 5:8–9 - Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

James 4:7 - Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

You want to banish the enemy from your life? Submit yourself to God and resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Put your trust in Jesus and come to Him for strength and help when you are in need.

Hebrews 2:17–18 - For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Hebrews 4:14–16 - Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For

we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.¹⁶ Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Come to God. No matter what your temptation is, there is always a way out.

1 Corinthians 10:13 - No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

Put your faith in Jesus. And as Jesus shows us in Luke 4, one of the most powerful weapons against the enemy is the truth of God’s Word. Look at Jesus repeatedly answering the devil with “It is written.” Clearly Jesus believed that the Scriptures were the authoritative Word of God, the truth

Ephesians 6:14-17 - Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Faith, truth, and the word of God to defeat the enemy.

And lastly, fight together, in community. Their backs were not covered because they guarded each other’s backs.

Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 - Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor:¹⁰ If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.¹¹ Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?¹² Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Share your life with other trusted people. Fight club, community groups, accountability, prayer meetings, whatever it takes. Don’t fight the battles of life alone.