

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message

January 11, 2026 "The Platform of Jesus. The temptations of Jesus"

I Intro.

We're slowly moving into the new year. We're starting to gear back up over the next few months. You'll want to keep up with everything that's happening at NCC. Stay connected through our social media to keep up with everything that's going on. Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are fully committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

II Recap.

It's an election year, and we're going to find ourselves getting pulled to places, emotions, because we feel like we're right. Chasing things that are going to tempt us to compromise some of our deeper values, because we want those things we feel 'right' about to get done. This will cause us to overlook, not condemn certain things, because we're swayed by the deep desire to see what we believe in, to happen. Worse, it'll affect our walk with Christ. And blur our ability to determine what 'feels' moral and what is actually right. So, we need something to attach ourselves to so we won't be whipped around. We need to be moored, anchored to what is solid. Protecting us from drifting, finding security, by maintaining a connection to be held in place. BUT— if you are moored to the wrong thing, you'll be tethered to something that won't protect you or keep you in place. You also will not experience the peace Christ desires for you. We need to be grounded in what it means to be a follower of Jesus during this upcoming year. To be grounded well, we're going to look at moments from the beginning of the ministry of Jesus to help us see what was important to him. Because what was important to Jesus, should also be important to us. And that should ground us also. "***The platform of Jesus***".

III Sunday.

We have to start with a few rather odd questions.

What is a weakness for you? Something you can't say "no" to?

Digging deeper. **What are some of the specific things you know you can be tempted about?** Thoughts, ideas, things you see or hear, that can pull you to a place you shouldn't go. Don't be ashamed. There's nothing new under the sun. Let me give you a warning, and an out. IF you cannot come up with anything— THAT may be a weakness for you. Not knowing your weaknesses is the most dangerous of all the weaknesses. Being able to name your weaknesses, ways to be tempted, is a great sign and power. And— **What are some 'false needs' you have?**

Things society, culture, told you that you have to have. Material things. A relationship. Have more influence or power. To be more liked. Validation. People's approval. I want you to think about all of the ways you, and others can be tempted. Whatever temptation you come up with I believe I probably can reduce it to one of three categories. But— I'll hit those after we read the scripture. Stay with me.

There are two accounts of the temptations of Jesus. Look at the one in Luke.

Luke 4:1-13. Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness,[a] where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry.

Then the devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become a loaf of bread.”

But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say, ‘People do not live by bread alone.’[b]”

Then the devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. “I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them,” the devil said, “because they are mine to give to anyone I please. I will give it all to you if you will worship me.”

Jesus replied, “The Scriptures say, ‘You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.’[c]”

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, “If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, ‘He will order his angels to protect and guard you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.’[d]”

Jesus responded, “The Scriptures also say, ‘You must not test the LORD your God.’[e]”

When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came.

-All the scriptures Jesus used were from Deuteronomy 4: [b] 4:4. [c] 4:8. [d] 4:10-11 [e] 4:4:12, 6:16.

Temptations faced by Jesus: Think back to the questions I asked earlier about where you may have some weaknesses, false needs, or are prone to be tempted. See if you see your temptation fits into one of the following categories. If you struggled to name or identify some weaknesses, or ways you could be tempted, maybe these can help shine some light on areas of your life. It may take a couple of steps to get to that place. Let's go over each one of the temptations Jesus faced.

1. Driven by the desire to have some material need met. Whether a necessary material need, or just a want. Possibly taking some shortcut to acquire that material thing. These are the things of everyday life we need. Food, housing, transportation, clothes, the basic needs. Then there are things (WANTS) that society tells us we have to have. High paying job, nice place to live, a nice car, eat out whenever we want, newest, latest, top of the line of everyday things. We'll get sucked into believing we do deserve them. The temptation is to compromise the teachings of Jesus because those things feel right. The need and pursuit of everyday things corrupts the definition of success from spiritual growth and maturity to the acquisition of them. Jesus was saying; as important and essential as 'things' are in our life, if we compromise ourselves to get them (adopt earthly values to acquire things) or they push out our spiritual growth, we are potentially sacrificing what God is offering us. Politics always elevates your material needs over your spiritual needs. To work through this, we have to be willing to see if we are compromising the teachings of Jesus by sacrificing spiritual truths for material needs. We seek to comfort ourselves by satisfying our desires rather than live a life devoted to forming our souls. The things we need are normal and necessary. But we have to see if we're willing to make choices to get these things that compromise who we are. Jesus was tested in this way, because he would honestly face this temptation. And he wanted us to know how important it is to control our material desires. And not let them override our spiritual growth.

2. The desire for power, influence, control. To be able to make your life be just like you want it.

This one can take a variety of forms. To not be perceived as weak, a victim, easily taken advantage of, to be made a fool of. Or just this thing inside that wants our will, preferences, desires, to override others. We all have to admit we like control. Being able to have an influence over the things that happen around and to us.

But will I have power and influence because I can dominate others or by serving?

Always having the right answer, wanting to be right. This is why often our prayer life is to fix the things we don't like, rather than asking God to give us what we need to make it through those things. This is such a normal and natural desire to crave and fight for power. This temptation can often lead us to running over people, or using them as tools to accomplish our goals. This is the lure of politics. We value effectiveness, efficiency, over valuing people. Getting things done no matter what happens to others. Like each of these, this is compromising the truths of God to accomplish worthy things. We all want agency over our lives. **What are we willing to give up in order to have that control?**

3. The desire to be liked, recognized, noticed, the approval of others. To not be alone. To not feel alone. To fit in. To belong.

This is ego-driven and can take a variety of forms. To be the smartest, prettiest, most successful, most athletic, most popular. Even perfectionism can be found here. To be validated, affirmed, receive applause. Or the one who runs to others' aid, always being the one who rescues and saves them. Being there for others when they're hurting, but to satisfy our own need to be needed. *"I can't tell the difference between you hurting and my need to be needed."* Again, recognition, wanting to be wanted is not a bad thing. We are called to live sacrificially, to serve. But not so others can notice us. But to bring recognition to the work God is doing.

Wrapping up each temptation.

These were all voiced as normal desires that run deep inside each of us. We HAVE to become aware of those powerful desires that run deep within us. To acquire things. To be liked. To feel safe. To have control. To have power. To have influence. To compare ourselves with others and strive to keep up with them in our life. I don't want to shame you if you have a difficult time discovering what those deep inner desires inside of you might be. The church hasn't done us any favors in doing this work. We've focused more on the behavior management than the causes. Just stop doing those things, and make sure to do these things. Just try to be like this, and not like this. **Trying always works really well doesn't it?**

Temptations highlight things deep inside of us that drive our thoughts and decisions. Desires placed by God, because we can do good things through them. But because we aren't always self-aware of what drives those desires, things in our life, that have slanted them towards self rather than God, we will compromise the teachings of Jesus to get these things done. And real change, transformation, the ability to stay grounded in tumultuous times, is to be aware, and allow God to transform us.

IV Challenge.

The purpose of this series is to keep us grounded during this upcoming year, as election stuff keeps swirling around. We're all going to be 'tempted' by what our preferred candidates or party is saying. Even if it compromises our values and beliefs. The reason why this was so important to Jesus. Why this account was included in the story of the life of Jesus, was to let us know that Jesus was tempted just like us. Each one of these temptations contain multitudes of issues, weakness, false needs that we all carry around with us all the time. And we need to constantly be aware of those in our lives.

The work of this particular story is to find ourselves in it.

1. You're going to have your material earthly side appealed to. You're going to hear; "here are the things you deserve, what you should have". And you're going to be tempted to compromise the teachings of Jesus because those things feel right. This was the temptation Jesus faced. Turning a stone into bread is not a bad thing. Bread is an essential, normal part of life. But it's the method and the rationale to do this that we have to watch out for. Material things, in and of themselves, are not bad things. The real temptation is to acquire them in a way that compromises the teachings of Jesus. Be keenly aware when you feel the pull of material things become so strong you're willing to compromise the teachings of Jesus to accomplish them.

2. You're going to be told that you should be able to decide what the world looks like. Your values and beliefs are right, and worth fighting for. And they so are. But you're going to be tempted to compromise the teachings of Jesus to put those values into place. You're going to be told to reclaim your power, ability to control, whether it hurts others or not, because you should be able to dictate how the world works. And you're going to harm and run over others in the process. This was the temptation Jesus faced. Jesus wasn't tempted to turn his back on God and worship satan. Jesus was tempted to allow the desire to have power and control over the world, how things should be, overtake his commitment to his father. Be keenly aware of the desire and pull to want the good things so badly, you're willing to turn to ungodly ways to accomplish them.

3. You're going to be tempted to compromise your values, and especially the teachings of Jesus to gain influence to accomplish what you feel is right. Currently we're living in a period of time where the belief, even among people who claim to be Christians is that the end justifies the means. In order to do the things we feel (and most of us do) to happen in our society, it's okay to set our values aside because the goal is worth it. This was exactly the temptations Jesus faced. Using the promises of God to justify asking God to do things outside of the way God works to accomplish his will. Yes— God does want that for the world. But does he want it to happen that way? And I know we all struggle here. Be keenly aware of the desire and pull of over valuing yourself, even if you feel like you can do good with it. It's important to have a powerful voice. As long as it aligns to the teachings of Jesus.

It's an election year. Be involved, vote YOUR values. But— stay informed with a critical ear. More importantly— stay grounded in the truth of Jesus. This is why it's so important to stay moored to the platform of Jesus. Let what was important to Jesus be important to us. All of these things are not inherently bad. But because they're not inherently bad, they can lead, tempt us into becoming something we're not in order to achieve them.

Just as Jesus constantly quoted Deuteronomy 4 to help him stay grounded in the midst of his temptations. This section of The Torah reminded the Israelites to stay grounded and connected to God and his desire for them as they traveled through other lands and nations. We lean on, and practice the same working of being grounded as we are equally pummeled by things that may resemble, and some very closely, the things of God. We lean into the truths of Jesus, to keep us centered, focused, on making what was important to Jesus important to us.

Again, where can you be tempted and how will you ground yourself in God to fight it?