

## **Sunday 03/09/25 – Panama Methodist Church**

**Sermon Title:** *“The Road to Redemption” Sermon Series: Part 1 of 7 – “Temptation, Vigilance, and God’s Promises” Matthew 19:21, Psalm 91:1-2, Luke 4:1-13*

**(Slides 1-18 will be listed in order throughout this sermon 😊!)**

On Ash Wednesday, this past Wednesday March 5<sup>th</sup>, we began the forty-day season of Lent. In this season, we are preparing ourselves for the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ our Lord on Good Friday. We will then move into the season of Easter, where we will celebrate Jesus Christ rising from the dead. Our opening slide, and the slide that we will be using through Easter Sunday encourages to follow Jesus Christ:

**Slide 1 – (“The Road to Redemption – Part 1” – Opening Slide”)**



In this our season of Lent, 2025, I invite us all to symbolically walk the road with Jesus Christ to redemption. In this season, may we walk with Jesus to finally get to His cross on Good Friday, and then to his empty tomb on Easter Sunday.

Before diving into talking about “Temptation, Vigilance, and God’s Promises” this morning, I want talk a little bit why some church like ours celebrate the season of Lent. It is not required of us by scripture, but it is scriptural. Here is what this season of Lent is:

**Slide 2 – (“The Season of Lent”)**

## **The Season of Lent:**

- Lent is a 40-day period of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in the Christian church. It's a time of preparation for Easter, which celebrates the resurrection of Jesus.**
- Lent is a time to recognize sins, repent, and seek a renewed relationship with God. It's also a time to practice self-control and self-discipline.**

It is true to say that this season developed as part of the tradition of the Christian Church, but it is a season that can be meaningful and spiritually fulfilling if we really enter into it. Another question to ask is why is the season Lent and also the season of Advent, for that matter, 40 days? The season of Lent is actually 46 days,

but we do not count Sundays, as it is Lord's Day. Here is why the season of Lent is 40 days:

**Slide 3 – (“Why is Lent 40 days?”)**

## **Why is Lent 40 days?**

- The number 40 is significant in the Bible, representing a time of testing, trial, and renewal.**
- The 40 days of Lent imitate the time Jesus spent fasting in the desert before beginning his public ministry.**

There are many number 40's in the bible, and the season of Lent and the season of Advent leading to Christmas, were created, and designed to be 40 day periods of time.

This “Follow” power point that I am using for this sermon series, as per our opening slide, includes a scripture from Matthew 19:21. This is the story of the rich young man, and it appears in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In this story, the rich young man tells Jesus that he has done everything right, followed all the rules, and all the religious laws of the Jewish faith. As a result, the rich young man should easily go to heaven one day. In fact, what else can I do the rich young man asks Jesus? Jesus responded in Matthew 19:21 saying:

Slide 4 – (“Matthew 19:21”)

## **Matthew 19:21, NRSV**

**<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to him, ‘If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’**

For the many of us that know this story in this or all three of the gospels that it is found in, we know that the rich young man left sad and grieving for he did not want to give up all of his possessions and wealth. Only God calls some people to do this, but the bigger point is are we willing to fully trust Jesus and are will to walk with Jesus during this season of Lent? Are we willing to walk with Him on his “Road to Redemption,” that will happen on that first Good Friday, when Jesus died for us all. We are called in this season of Lent and always follow Jesus.

Since the title of this sermon this morning is called, “Temptation, Vigilance, and God’s Promises,” our main preaching scripture for this morning will be from Luke 4:1-13, on Jesus being tested by the devil in the wilderness for 40-days without eating. After this, Jesus is then tempted three times after that. With the

theme this morning of “Temptation, Vigilance, and God’s Promises,” I have a question for us to consider this morning:

**Slide 5 – (“40-Days Question”)**

**Could we stay fully true to Christ for forty-days, while eating nothing and being tested by the devil?**

So, Jesus is tested by the devil by 40 days and does not eat for forty-days. Do we think that we could survive that? Before diving into our preaching scripture from Luke 4:1-13 for this morning, here is a good scripture that reminds us that God is our shelter and our refuge. This scripture from Psalm 91:1-12, says:

**Slide 6 – (“Psalm 91:1-2”)**

**Psalm 91:1-2**

**Assurance of God’s Protection**

**<sup>1</sup> You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, <sup>2</sup> will say to the LORD, ‘My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.’**

When we have fully submitted to Christ, we are in the spiritual shelter of God, who loves us all more than we could ever understand. In fact, I have a good picture for us to look at that emphasizes this scripture. Here it is:

**Slide 7 – (“God Alone is My Refuge - Picture”)**



When Jesus is the wilderness in our preaching scripture from the gospel of Luke 4:1-13 for this morning, Jesus, once again, is tested for 40 days, and the devil tries to tempt him three more times after this. If you have your bibles or your bible apps I would invite you to open to the gospel of Luke 4:1-13, where we hear about “The Temptation of Jesus” in the wilderness. Let us look at Luke 4:1-13 together:

Slide 8 – (“Luke 4:1-2, NRSV”)

## **Luke 4:1-2, NRSV**

### **The Temptation of Jesus**

**1** Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, <sup>2</sup> where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.

Slide 9 – (“Luke 4:3-5, NRSV”)

## **Luke 4:3-4, NRSV**

<sup>3</sup> The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.’ <sup>4</sup> Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, “One does not live by bread alone.”’

Slide 10 – (“Luke 4:5-6, NRSV”)

## **Luke 4:5-6, NRSV**

<sup>5</sup> Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup> And the devil said to him, ‘To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please.

Slide 11 – (“Luke 4:7-8, NRSV”)

## **Luke 4:7-8, NRSV**

<sup>7</sup> If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.’ <sup>8</sup> Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, “Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”’

**Slide 12 – (“Luke 4:9-10, NRSV”)**

## **Luke 4:9-10, NRSV**

**<sup>9</sup> Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, <sup>10</sup> for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you”,**

**Slide 13 – (“Luke 4:9-11-13, NRSV”)**

## **Luke 4:11-13, NRSV**

**<sup>11</sup> and “On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.” <sup>12</sup> Jesus answered him, ‘It is said, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’ <sup>13</sup> When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.**

So, after Jesus was baptized by his cousin John the Baptist in the Jordan River, the scripture tells that Jesus was thirty-years only when He started His three-year public ministry. We then hear of the ancestors of Jesus in Luke 3:23-38, and then we have what we just read from Luke 4:1-13, “The Temptation of Jesus.” Imagine being tested by the devil for forty straight days. Oh, and by the way, you

are not going to eat any food at all for the entirety of the forty days! How many of us could make it that long? Most people would starve to death by forty days, but this is Jesus Christ our Lord we are talking about, after all. I have preached a sermon or two before where I refer to Jesus being in the wilderness for 40 days, as Jesus' "Basic Training". Before you are officially in one of the branches of the United States military you have to go through some sort of "Basic Training." Jesus has been baptized by his cousin John the Baptist, and God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit were all present. Then before Jesus starts his three public ministry on earth, he goes to testing or proving grounds in the wilderness. As we just read however, Jesus Christ, being fully God and fully human will pass the 40 days of testing and the three temptations after that with flying colors.

Our gospel of Luke reading for this morning tells us in 4:2, that when Jesus' 40 days of testing were over, he was "famished" or unbelievably hungry. Knowing this full well, the devil decided immediately to try to trick Jesus. Often the devil does not attack us when we are strong, but more so when we are weak. Jesus has not eaten in 40 days, and he has been tested by the devil for 40 days. What a perfect time to try to go after Jesus.

The first test that the devil tried on Jesus was turning a stone to bread, as Jesus was hungry. In fact, the devil said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to be a loaf of bread." Jesus said, "It is written, 'One does not

live by bread alone.” So, Jesus passes the hunger test, which many probably would have not.

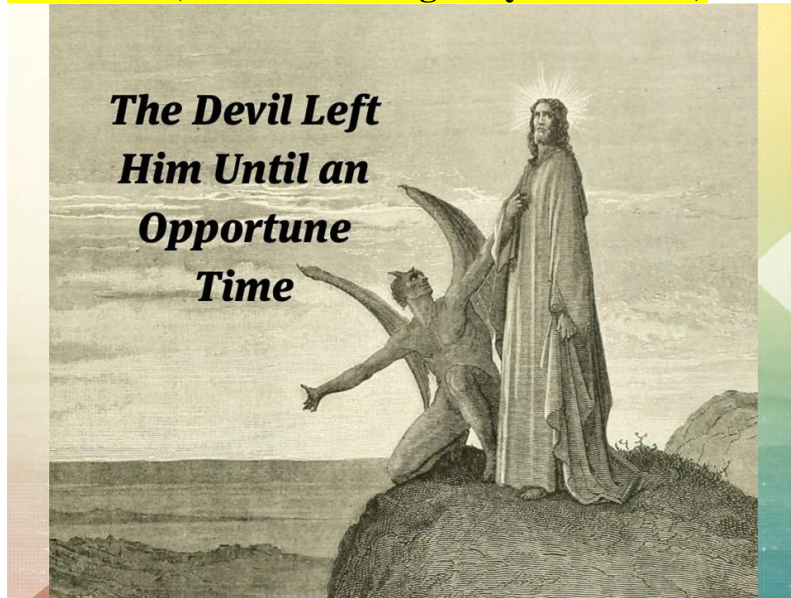
The next test for Jesus is greed, power, and wealth. The devil led Jesus up, and she showed him all the kingdoms of the world. Then the devil once again said to Jesus, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please.” The devil then once again, says, “If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” Jesus now responds to the devil a second time and says, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

In a third and final effort to trick Jesus, the devil then led Jesus to the very top or pinnacle of the great Temple in Jerusalem. The devil then said to Jesus, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’” Jesus then responds to the devil a third time and says this, “It is said, ‘Do, not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Since Jesus passed all these of these tests, after 40 days of being tempted with no food, the devil departed Jesus’ presence. The scripture says of the devil though, “he depart from him until an opportune time.” You see the devil often goes

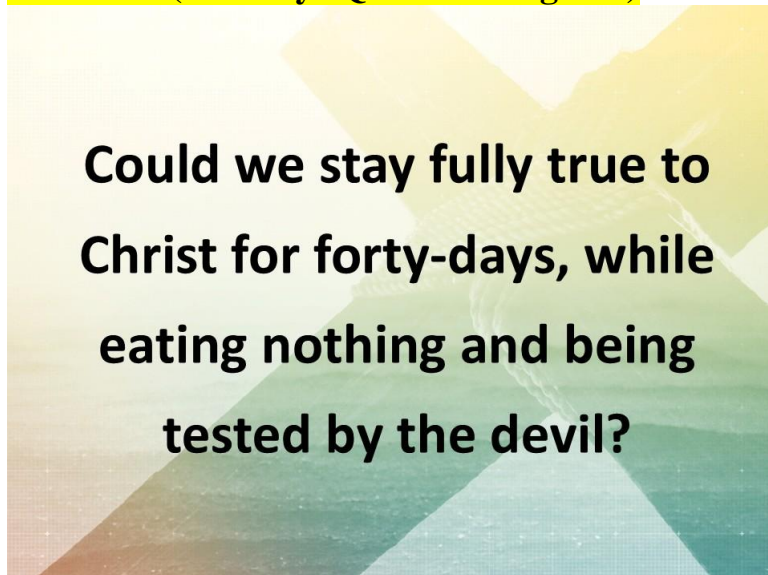
after often when we are weak, not when we are strong. I even found a picture of Jesus' tempted by the devil that shows this reality very well.

**Slide 14 – (“Jesus Challenged by the Devil”)**



Now that we have discussed and have gone through all of this, let me ask us these “40-Days Question” again. Here they are:

**Slide 15 – (“40-Days Question - Again”)**



So often we think of Jesus, loving, gentle, etc. Jesus was and is all those things, but Jesus is also as tough as nails. Jesus was tested by the devil in the wilderness for 40 days before he started his three-year public ministry. Jesus ate no food during these 40 days, and with the human part of him temporarily weakened, the devil then tried three times to trick and twist Jesus. Jesus passed all these tests. If this experience was Jesus' "Basic Training," like in the military, I would say that Jesus passed with flying colors. Everything the devil and world threw at Him, he always prevailed.

In this first Sunday in Lent, Jesus gives us on this "Road to Redemption," towards His cross, a model of overcoming "temptation," a display "vigilance" against the devil, and shows us how to stand on "God's Promises." In addition to all of this, the savior and lord that will die for us on a cross, starts his journey in the wilderness for 40 days. Jesus passes his own version of "Basic Training," and his success there will be the same success he will have in dying for us on the cross for the sins of the world and rising from the dead on Easter Sunday. Due to all this, Jesus is strong, powerful, tough, and the only one qualified to be an all-sufficient lord and savior.

Here is how this sermon on "Temptation, Vigilance, and God's Promises" applies to our lives today:

**Slide 16 – (“Application to our Lives”: # 1)**

## **Application To Our Lives # 1**

**- Luke 4:1-13 - Tells the story of Jesus' temptation by the devil in the wilderness. This passage shows Jesus' victory over temptation and his commitment to God's will.**

If Jesus can stand strong, with strong faith, God can get us through things that maybe we never thought that we could get through before. Jesus is the only one who walked this earth that overcame all evil and all the powers of this world. To emphasize this even more, I love what this second application to our lives slide tell us about Jesus. This is what it says:

**Slide 17 – (“Application to our Lives”: # 2)**

## **Application To Our Lives # 2**

**- Luke 4:1-13 - Jesus's first battle against evil:** Jesus's time in the wilderness was his first open fight against evil on behalf of humanity.

**- Luke 4:1-13 - Jesus's victory over temptation:** Jesus resisted Satan's temptations by quoting Scripture and remaining faithful to God.

So ,our gospel of Luke 4:1-13 reading for this morning according to our second application slide talks about “Jesus’s first battle against evil,” and it also talks about “Jesus’s victory over temptation.”

**Slide 18 – (“Application to our Lives”: # 3)**

## **Application To Our Lives # 3**

### **- Luke 4:1-13 - Jesus's public ministry:**

After returning from the wilderness, Jesus began his public ministry, which included teaching, healing, and calling disciples.

### **- Luke 4:1-13 - Jesus's example**

Jesus's victory over temptation is an example for us to follow, as we resist temptation and remain faithful to God.

Finally, here is our third and last application to our lives slide for this morning.

After Jesus’ 40 days in the wilderness, being tempted and tested by the devil, he then went forth for three years, teaching, healing, calling disciples, and transforming the world. Jesus’ journey will lead us to his cross on Good Friday, and the victory we read about this morning that Jesus had over temptation and the devil is only the beginning of how Jesus will show us again and again that he truly was God in the flesh on earth.

As I call the praise team forward this morning to sing our closing song, I invite us all again to walk with Jesus, on the road, which is the “Road to

Redemption.” As we walk through this season of Lent together, we will see how Jesus lived, led, and loved, and how almost two-thousand years later we can walk with him again. Amen.