DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEXT SUMMARY

Today's text, Matt 4:1-11, sketches the temptation of Jesus.

INTRODUCTION (observation):

This is another very familiar text, and we are again tempted to neglect the importance of careful observation. Again, this week we will employ one or both of the following methods to do a close reading of this overly familiar story, and we will add a third method. What did you notice this time that you had not seen before?

1. Copy the text to make yourself attend to every phrase, every word.
2. Read the text aloud to slow down and reinforce the meaning by doubling your sensory input (seeing and hearing).
3. Use the footnotes in your Bible to help you see how the Bible is, as they say, "its own best interpreter."

DISCUSSION (INTERPRETATION):

Scholars like to point to two vivid parallels to this story in the Hebrew Scripture.

1. Scholars like to point to a strong parallel between Christ's temptation in the wilderness outside Jerusalem and Israel's temptation in the wilderness between Egypt and the Promised Land. What parallels do you see between the two contexts of the events? (What happened to Israel right before her wilderness sojourn began, and what happened to Jesus right before He was tempted in the wilderness?)
2. Paul tells us that Christ is the second Adam (Rom 5:12-21). What parallels do you see between Adam and Eve's temptation in the Garden of Eden and Christ's temptation in the wilderness?

SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

1. **One of the remarkable things about Jesus' response to temptation was His use of Scripture.** It was as if crisis brought God's Word to His mind. Like all Jewish boys of that day, He had no doubt committed vast swaths of the Hebrew Scriptures to memory.

    - What are some favorite biblical texts that you have hidden away in your heart?
    - How have you hidden God's Word in your heart: through frequent repetition of favorite texts and/or through systematic memorization?
    - What is the difference between hiding God's Word in your heart and merely memorizing the syllables in correct sequence?
    - Have you ever had God's Word come to your mind in a crisis – temptation or discouragement or suffering?

2. **Satan attacked Jesus with the same broad temptations he uses to tempt us today.** These three temptations have come to be known in Christian thought as "the world, the flesh, and the devil."

    - What are some of the ways those three temptations – the world, the flesh, and the devil – present themselves in your own spiritual struggle against sin?
    - Which of the three temptations is your greatest test, what the writer of Hebrews called "the sin that clings so closely" (Heb 12:1)?
        - What are the circumstances in which you are most susceptible to this temptation?
        - What Scripture do you know that addresses this temptation particularly? Have you committed that Scripture to memory?