*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

February 20 - 25

“The Life of Jesus: Temptation”

**Monday, February 20 Matthew 4:1-11**

*“Jesus was led out into the wilderness . . . to be tempted”*

Following the baptism of Jesus and the divine revelation that he is the Son of God, Matthew gives us the account known as the Temptations of Christ. Jesus is about to enter publicly into his work of introducing men and women to the Kingdom of God, calling them into fellowship with the heavenly Father. The question facing him was how he would fulfill this task. The word “tempt” as used in this passage carries the basic meaning “to test.” Such testing is a necessary part of life in revealing the true mettle of a person. Jesus had his sense of vocation tested with the choice between God’s Kingdom and Satan’s.

A classic illustration of testing is found in the story of God’s testing Abraham (Genesis 22), in which God asked that he give his only son, Isaac, the son whom he loved, as a sacrifice to God. In Abraham’s act of obedience he demonstrated the absolute commitment of his life to God and his will. Similarly, the testing of Jesus is the demonstration of his full commitment to his Father. John writes of Jesus in his gospel that “He did always those things which pleased the Father.”

*I choose your Kingdom, Lord, and reject Satan’s. Amen.*

**Tuesday, February 21 Mark 1:12-13**

*“Immediately . . .”*

There is no time to bask in the glorious presence of the Spirit of God, to enjoy the companionship of likeminded individuals seeking to be a part of God’s Kingdom, to take pleasure in the cool waters and fruitful shores of the Jordan River, or to relax in the Father’s affirmation of his Sonship. As soon as he steps from the waters of baptism he is compelled by the Spirit to enter the hot, dry and lonely wilderness, there to suffer the physical, emotional and spiritual trials of Satanic temptation.

Jesus’ character is being tested. Each of us wears public masks – a serious mask for our daily work, a smiling mask for our moments with friends, a pious mask when we go to church. When we are all alone, these masks come off and our true character is the face we see in the mirror of our privacy. It is prime time for Satan to make his move. He approaches Jesus with three well-known temptations – physical pleasure, personal success, and political power. With no one looking on, what will Jesus’ character reveal?

*When tested, Lord, I pray that my character reveals my commitment to you. Amen.*

**Wednesday, February 22 Luke 4:1-13**

*“The Devil tempted him for forty days”*

The Devil’s strategy is not for Jesus to disbelieve that God exists. Rather, it is to make Jesus believe that God is not trustworthy and that he must therefore take his life into his own hands. During the three temptations the devil says to Jesus twice: “If you are the Son of God.” He is trying to make Jesus doubt God’s word that he is God’s Son. This is the same strategy that the Devil used with Adam and Eve when he convinced them that they couldn’t trust what God had said about eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden.

Our basic sin against God is mistrust. The devil hints that God is withholding something from us and he suggests ways in which we can take care of ourselves and get what is our due. In the temptations we read about here, Jesus is confronted with the choice of whether to trust God or to give in to the easy successes promised by the devil. Whether it is taking care of his own needs, following the Devil’s formula for success, or accepting his strategy for popularity, Jesus rejects the easy way and sticks with the long road of obedience to the Father.

*I trust in you, heavenly Father, and will continue to walk in obedience. Amen.*

February 20 - 25

“The Life of Jesus: Temptation”

**Thursday, February 23 1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

*“Be careful, for you, too, may fall into sin”*

Paul’s concern for his friends in Corinth is that they are not taking temptation seriously enough, thus setting themselves up for a great fall. So he gives them some very pointed and practical advice, which is still good today. First, we need to be realistic both about the temptations we will face and our own strength to resist. Verse 12 is a warning against unfounded pride and a call to be humble about our own spiritual strength. One of the best defenses we have is to become realistic about the temptations of the world in which we live and to be honest about our own limited spiritual resources to resist.

Then, in verse 13, Paul gives his readers two great words of assurance about their trials and temptations. First, God will set some limits on what he will allow to happen to us for God knows us, our strengths and our weaknesses. This doesn’t mean that we will never be overcome by evil but that our failure will not be the result of having more than we can handle. Second, Paul assures us that with every temptation there will be a way out without giving in to sin. The key is to ask God for help; he will give it.

*I will turn to you, Lord, in times of temptation. Amen.*

**Friday, February 24 1 Timothy 6:6-10**

*“People who long to be rich fall into temptation”*

We are bombarded constantly with the message that financial independence is the great goal of the good life. From life insurance to money market funds, pension funds to IRAs, investments to real estate. The great design is to achieve financial security and independence. The Bible does not argue against wise planning that can keep one from being a burden to others, but it does raise questions about the desire to be rich for its own sake and the way that wealth hinders our trust in God.

Unchecked desire for money leads to the love of money. And the love of money is “a root of all kinds of evil.” It is important that the text be quoted correctly for it does not say that money is “the root of all evil.” Money itself is neither good nor evil; it is morally neutral. It is the use to which it is put that is either good or evil. The love of money is called greed, and greed has a way of becoming all-consuming. Second, evil confronts us on many fronts, and to regard money as the only or even the major root of evil runs the risk of ignoring evil’s many temptations.

*I desire to serve you well with my money, Lord. Amen.*

**Saturday, February 25 James 1:12-18**

*“God blesses those who endure temptation”*

Temptation can be used for our good or for our harm. The outcome depends upon our response to the temptation. Jesus was tempted for forty days in the wilderness, but he did not submit to temptation. He did not sin. Instead, he overcame the temptation that he faced. James tells us that temptation to do evil does not come from God, and then he goes on to reveal to us the real source of temptation to do evil by presenting us with a four-step sequence.

First, we are tempted when we are drawn away from God’s will by our own desires or lust. Second, the offered sin entices us for Satan, who knows us well, has baited the hook with something that is hard for us to resist. Third, when we take the bait, when we give in to the offer and actually partake of the temptation, sin is born. Finally, when sin is full-grown, it brings forth death: “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). The time to resist temptation is right when it begins to draw us away from God. Play with it, and it will hook us. Resist it, and it will leave us alone.

*As soon as I feel temptation’s tug, Lord, I will resist it. Amen.*