**Surviving Quarantine Series**

**Discovering 40 Day Episodes in the Bible**

**“Overcoming Temptation”**

**Matthew 4.1-11**

**Introduction**

Our current series is “Surviving Quarantine – Discovering 40-Day Episodes in the Bible.” The word “quarantine” comes from two Italian words *quaranta giorni,* which means “40 days.” The Bible has several instances where God used the period of 40 days. So we are entering the sixth week in our own 40-day journey through the Scripture looking at 7 episodes where God used 40-days to help us survive quarantine.

Today we come to the first 40-day episode in the New Testament – Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. Jesus’ wilderness experience is recorded in three Gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Each of the Gospel accounts tells us that Jesus went into the wilderness immediately after His baptism.

Let me read from Matthews account – Matthew 3.16-4.2:

*After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.” Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.**And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.* (Mt.3.16-4.2)

This portion of Scripture is familiar to many but its familiarity can hinder us from recognizing the truths within it. First, Jesus baptism was a declaration of His deity as the Son of God. We see this not only in the Spirit of God descending and resting on Jesus (Jn.1.33) but we see it clearly in the Father’s declaration, *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”* Jesus’ baptism was a public declaration that Jesus was the Son of God. He was *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*. (Jn.1.29)

And immediately after His baptism *Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.* Mark’s Gospel makes the strong point saying, “*And immediately the Spirit drove Him out into the wilderness*.” (Mk.1.12) The point is that Jesus’ wilderness experience occurred immediately after His baptism for a divine purpose. This was not an accident. This was not the Son of God stumbling into temptation. This was part of the Divine plan. This is part if the Spirit’s work. Jesus is being led into the wilderness to engage in deliberate divine combat with Satan. Our Lord enters the battlefield of the wilderness to firmly establish that He is the Son of God, the incarnate God-man, who is the victor over the enemy. Jesus enters the wilderness to conquer where Adam failed!

**The Last Adam**

The Apostle Paul tells us explicitly that there is a connection between the first man, Adam, and the last Adam, Jesus, in the book of Romans chapter five. (Rom.5.12-21; ICor.15.45) Let me read just one verse in this beautiful section of Scripture. *For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.* (Rom.5.19) The Apostle clearly teaches that in order for us to be saved, Jesus had to succeed where Adam fail. What we see in the book of Genesis is that immediately after the first Sabbath Adam was tempted along with his wife to disobey God’s Word. And what we see in these Gospel accounts is that immediately after Jesus is declared the Son of God at His baptism He immediately goes into the wilderness to conquer where Adam failed! Just like Jesus resolutely set His face towards Jerusalem at the end of His earthly ministry here we see Jesus setting His face towards the wilderness at the beginning of His ministry to be victorious over the temptations of the devil.

Jesus deliberately went into the wilderness to demonstrate that He was the incarnate Son of God who was sent by the Father to do what Adam failed to do and to establish the Covenant of Grace. Jesus’ temptation experience was similar to Adam’s but it was far more difficult. Jesus met Satan in the desert wilderness while Adam enjoyed paradise. Adam enjoyed the company of his wife, Eve, while Jesus was alone. Adam was well fed from the trees of the Eden while Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights. It seems like Jesus was willingly “tied one hand behind His back” before entering the boxing ring with the devil.

The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us,

*He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.**For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.* (Heb.2.17.18)

The incarnate God-man humbled Himself to suffer the worst possible conditions so that no one could say, "You don’t know what I'm going through right now. No one has ever suffered like I'm suffering. No one has ever faced the kind of temptations I'm facing right now.” Brothers and sisters, it was necessary for Jesus to be tempted in every respect like us so He could be our merciful and faithful high priest before God. Since He Himself had gone through temptation and suffering, He is able to help us when we are tempted. Though there might not be anyone who knows exactly what you're going through, the fact is Jesus does and He is able to come to the your aid during times of temptation. During the quarantine there has been a rise in the number of case involving depression, anxiety, and suicide. People are tempted to consider options they would have never considered in the past. To survive quarantine we must go to the only One who can provide us the aid and assistance we need when we are tempted.

**The Tempter**

So after humbling Himself by fasting forty days and forty nights, Jesus became hungry and like the Adam’s experience in the Garden the tempter came. (Mt.4.2-3a) Three different names are used to identify the enemy of our souls. Matthew calls the adversary “the tempter,” Mark calls him “Satan,” and Luke calls him “the devil.” Whatever name you call him the fact is that he is the “father of lies” and “there is no truth in him.” (Jn.8.44) Satan’s tactic is always to tempt you to doubt God’s provisions, to doubt God’s protection, and to distract you from making the Lord your number one priority. This is exactly how Satan tempts Jesus in the wilderness.

**Tempts You to Doubt God’s Provisions**

First, our enemy tempts us to doubt God’s provisions. *And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”* (Mt.4.3) Since the quarantine this temptation has become easy for many of us to relate to. With the unemployment rate at a historic high, many taking reductions in the pay, and the lost of hours of working many are tempted to doubt God’s provisions. But don’t forget Jesus was hungry really hungry but He still trusted in God’s provisions. You might be hungry really hungry but don’t fall into the temptation to doubt God’s provisions. It is interesting that the first temptation Satan presents to Jesus was the consumption of food. This was the failure of the first Adam and there is no evidence that Adam was hungry when he ate of the forbidden fruit. But the text says that Jesus became hungry. And even though he was out in the middle of the desert and really hungry He was not going to give in to the temptation to doubt the Father’s loving provision. So Jesus answers and said, *“It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’”* (Mt.4.3-4)

Jesus begins with the expression, “*It is written*,” as He will do in the next two temptations. These expressions show Jesus’ exalted view of the Word of God as the sword of Spirit that is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Eph.6.17; Heb.4.12) Jesus quotes Moses’ words to Israel reminding them of God’s provisions during the forty years of their wilderness journey. Listen to Moses, “*He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.”* (Dt.8.3) Jesus response to the tempter was filled with confidence in the Father’s care. Jesus was saying, “The Father humbled me and let me go hungry but what you don’t know is that during these 40-days I’ve been feeding on His heavenly promises that has given Me understanding to know that man doesn’t live by bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” Brothers and sisters, the way we survive the quarantine is by consuming God’s Word on a daily basis. We need to move on from the milk of the Word to ingesting and digesting the solid food of God’s Word. For those who consume the solid food of God’s Word will be able to discern good and evil. (Heb.5.12, 14)

**Tempts You to Doubt God’s Protection**

Secondly, our enemy tempts us to doubt God’s protection. The text continues, *Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,*

*and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command His angels concerning You’; and ‘On their hands they will bear You up,
So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.’”* (Mt.4.5-6)We don’t know where Jesus stood on the pinnacle of the temple but the Jewish historian, Josephus, believed that Jesus stood of the roof-edge of Herod’s royal portico looking down 450 feet onto the Kidron valley. If it is true that Jesus was overlooking the Kidron valley it would mean that Jesus was gazing on the same valley that He and His disciples would cross on the way to the garden of Gethsemane the night He was betrayed.

What is interesting about this temptation is that the tempter quotes the Bible in an attempt to make his point. *For it is written, “He will command His angels concerning You’; and ‘On their hands they will bear You up, So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.”* You might remember this verse from our series on Psalm 91 where in verse eleven and twelve the Psalmist declares, *For He will give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands, that you do not strike your foot against a stone.* (Ps.91.11-12) Here God promises us His divine protection through His heavenly security guards – His angels. But you might also remember that I told you that the most striking thing about these angels, God’s spiritual security guards, is that the Lord has commanded them to be concerned about the smallest affliction in our lives. *They will bear you up in their hands, that you do not strike your foot against a stone.* What God is promising is to provide protection against the most minimal affliction – stubbing our toes. Here God is promising to provide protection from an affliction that would have been caused because of our own clumsiness. The point is that God protection extends to trials great and small from a global pandemic to stubbing our toe. Thanks be to God!

But notice that Satan is taking Psalm 91.11-12 out of context. Instead of the Lord’s angels protecting us from our clumsiness, the devil is telling Jesus to jump off of the pinnacle of the temple on the false notion that God will send His angels to catch Him before He crashing on the rocks below. So, *Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”* (Mt.4.7) Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy chapter six where Moses is reminding the new generation not to test the Lord as their forefathers had done. The old generation had doubted the Lord’s protection in the wilderness by asking, “Is the Lord with us or not?” (Ex.17.7) The previous generation doubted God’s protection to the point that they were ready to take matters into their own hands and stone Moses to death. (Ex.17.1-7) Brothers and sisters, the way we survive the quarantine is by trusting that the Lord is with us and that He will protect us. The way we survive the quarantine is by making the Lord our refuge and the Most High our dwelling place. If we do that the Lord promises that no evil will befall us and no plague will come near our tent. (Ps.91.9-10)

**Tempts You from Making God Your Number One Priority**

*Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.”* (Mt.4.8-9) Actually the third temptation was for Christ no temptation at all. Jesus knew that *the earth is Lord’s, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.* (Ps.24.1) Glorifying the Father was Jesus’ number one priority and nothing was going to distract Him from pleasing the Father. So *Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’”*(Mt.4.10)

Even though the third temptation was no problem for Jesus to resist, its not always like that for some of us. Many allow the things of this world to distract them from making and maintaining the Lord as their number one priority. After the September 11th terror attacks, many expected American houses of worship to be jammed with people seeking refuge and a place to grieve. And that spike in church attendance did in fact occur. Briefly. There was an uptake in church attendance for a few weeks and then it went back to same level as to prior to 9/11. During the pandemic we haven’t been allow to gather together to seek the Lord and His comfort. We haven’t been able to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. (Rom.12.15) And I wonder what will happen when we are able to gather again. I wonder if people will seek first the kingdom of God or they will start seeking their own kingdoms instead. Time will tell but my pray is that people will be steadfast in the fact that seeking first the kingdom of God is essential for their spiritual health. My prayer is that people hold the worship of the Lord their God as their highest value and serve Him only. If we do we would have survived quarantine.

**Closing Thought**

As I close this morning I want you to know that Jesus entered the battlefield of the wilderness to firmly establish that He is the Son of God, the incarnate God-man, who is the victor over the enemy. Jesus entered the wilderness to conquer where Adam failed! Jesus was *tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* (Heb.4.15-16) If you are going through trials or temptation draw near to Christ with confidence expecting to receive mercy and find help in your time of need. Brothers and sisters, Jesus humbled Himself by fasting 40-days in the wilderness and was tempted so that He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. (Heb.2.18) Jesus said, *“Begone Satan!” And the devil left Him*. (Mt.4.10-11) Lets say to Satan “begone!” The Bible tells us, *Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you*. (Js.4.7) This is the way we survive the quarantine!