

Luke 4:1-13 – The Temptation of Jesus.



“A battle of two kingdoms”. Rev. Bruce Stanley

(video first... ~1 minute)

- David Blaine is an endurance artist.

In April last year he set a new world record for holding his breath under water. 17 minutes and 4 seconds.

In September 2003, he went 44 days without food inside a transparent Plexiglas case suspended 9 metres in the air in London, living on just 4.5 litres of water per day. People threw eggs at him and sausages, bacon, beer cans, and golf balls. Someone even used a remote control helicopter to fly a hamburger up to him to taunt him.

He says that he does it to push the limits of the human body.

And as we turn to Luke chapter 4, our first impressions of Jesus might be that he is an amazing endurance artist. 40 days in the desert without food, is very impressive.

But what Luke shares with us is not a test of endurance, but a battle of 2 kingdoms. This is Satan’s attempt to stop the mission of Jesus to go to the cross.

And he begins with Jesus’ most pressing physical need – food. Verse 3:

- *3The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."*

IF YOU ARE the Son of God. Satan challenges Jesus to PROVE that he is the Son of God, by providing food for himself. He challenges Jesus: “Feed **yourself**. Satisfy **yourself**.”

- *4Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'"*

Jesus answers the devil with Scripture. Deuteronomy 8:3 –These are the words that God spoke to the Israelites while **they** were in the desert – he was telling them to **trust** Him to provide all their needs, and not to whinge and complain to Moses every time they were hungry or thirsty.

Satan is tempting Jesus to NOT trust the Father. To NOT go the way of the cross. But instead, to look after himself. To satisfy himself. To take the easy road. But Jesus knows the words and the promises of God – that his Father will provide all his needs. So he doesn’t **need** to turn stones into bread.

And so Satan brings a second temptation. From verse 5:

- *5The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendour, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7So if you worship me, it will all be yours."*

Satan is offering Jesus the kingdom of the world NOW, **as is**.

- **III** – Sometimes when you buy something second hand, it says: "AS IS". Like this PlayStation games machine for sale "as is" for \$500. A scratch down the middle and some burn marks.

Satan is offering Jesus the kingdoms of the world "AS IS". A broken and sinful world. He's saying "take the world '**as is**' now. Forget about the problem of sin. Forget about the suffering of the cross. Have it all now, AS IS. Settle for less. Verse 8:

- *8Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"*

Again, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy, 6:13 – again a verse from when Israel was in the desert. Israel was told to remove the other nations from the Promised Land and to have nothing to do with them. But they failed. They failed to deal with these sinful nations. They took the Promised Land "AS IS" and didn't bother dealing with sin. They chose to worship other gods. And Jesus is being tempted to do the same. Forget about sin. Forget about the cross. Take the world "AS IS". But Jesus remains faithful to God and faithful to the way of the cross.

And so finally, Satan throws a third temptation at him. From verse 9:

- *9The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. 10For it is written:
" 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully;
11they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"*

Satan is clever! This time **he** quotes Scripture - from Psalm 91 – and challenges Jesus to prove who he is – "if you **are** the Son of God, throw yourself off this building! God will catch you – Psalm 91 says so!

- *12Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*

That's **another** verse from Deuteronomy, 6:16 – it's from the time Israel tested God again and again as they wandered in the desert for 40 years. They **demand** God provide them with water and food. They didn't trust God to provide what they needed. They **demand** from him again and again.

Again, the heart of this temptation is the cross. Satan is suggesting that **if Jesus is** the Son of God, he should demand protection from God. To be kept safe. To not have to go the way of the cross. But Jesus doesn't **test** God. He **trusts** him.

- **So what does Jesus' temptation mean for us?**

Every temptation was designed to attack Jesus' relationship with his Father and to stop him going to the cross. To distract him. To take the easy road. To forget about saving the world, and look after himself.

And that's what this passage teaches us about Jesus. He is obedient to the Father's will, even to the point of death on a cross. He came to serve us, not to protect himself. He came to deal with sin and to rescue us and nothing was going to stop him from that mission. Satan failed to stop Jesus. So now, Satan turns to us. He wants to turn **us** away from the cross.

- And it all comes down to the same one thing for us – **satisfaction and distraction.**

The kingdom of this world is **immersed** in self-satisfaction. We find satisfaction in what we buy, in what we have, in what we eat, what we do. We pursue being satisfied. The question is: How does **God** want us to be satisfied? I'm sure God doesn't mind us having a comfortable home or a TV or nice holidays. But he doesn't want us to find our **satisfaction in life** from these material things.

Man does not live by bread alone. What's the rest of that verse? ... **"but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."** God wants us to find satisfaction in his **word**, not in this **world**.

He wants us to find satisfaction in our relationship with him and not be distracted by the things the world has to offer.

Not many of us would be able to go 40 days without food. Or even 40 days without a roof over our head. Or even 40 days without a phone, or running water, or a flushing toilet, or a fridge, or electricity. We don't **need** all the modern luxuries of life. But our struggle is that we find such deep satisfaction in these things. They distract us from true satisfaction.

Satan wants to distract us by finding satisfaction with the things of the world NOW. As is. He wants us to forget about the cross. Satan wants us to be so satisfied and distracted with the world right now that we forget about the future that God has planned for us.

Satan says: "If God loves you, if you're a child of God, he will keep you safe from harm and make your life easy." Otherwise, it's not worth following God, right?

Because he knows that if you expect an easy life from God, then as soon as the hard times come, you'll give up and walk away.

But Jesus shows us that the way of the cross, the way of God's plans, is often difficult. It's a road of self-denial, a road that is NOT always easy. But it's the way that leads to eternal life.

Here it is in a nutshell:

If we seek satisfaction from the world *now*, "as is", we will easily be distracted from God's promises for our future. That's what Satan wants. And it will happen from time to time. As much as we resist temptation, we will often fail. But here is what the passage brings us:

- **Jesus has already overcome.**

He overcame temptation. He went to the cross. And through the cross, he offers us forgiveness for all the times we give in to temptation.

Satan's aim is to distract us from the cross, because he knows that is the one place we can be satisfied with God. The cross is where we find complete satisfaction for our sins, for our failures, for our guilt, and for our future.

Distraction is Satan's weapon. He wants us to be satisfied with the world now, so we forget the great future that Jesus promises. And that future is actually spelled out in Psalm 91 – the same passage that Satan quotes to Jesus. **(turn to Psalm 91).**

"He will command his angels concerning you to guard you..." (v11)

Later in that Psalm, verse 13, it says this:

"You will tread on the lion and the cobra, you will trample the great lion and the serpent."

This Psalm is prophetic. It's prophetic about the defeat of Satan by those who put their trust in God. And in the last verse of that Psalm, here is God's promises to those who trust him:

"With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

This is the promise of God. Do not be distracted. He will satisfy you not with what this world has to offer. But with a salvation of eternal life.

Let's pray.

Father, thank you that because of Jesus' death on the cross, and his resurrection, we have new life, new hope and a new eternal future with you. May we be satisfied by you because of your great promises to us. Amen.

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- Jesus: endurance artist?

Temptation 1:

- *3The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."*
- *4Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'"*

Temptation 2:

- *7So if you worship me, it will all be yours."*
- *8Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"*

Temptation 3:

- *"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here.*
- *12Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*

Our temptation:

- **Satisfaction and Distraction.**

Our answer: Jesus has already overcome.

Psalm 91:13 - “You will tread on the lion and the cobra, you will trample the great lion and the serpent.”

Psalm 91:16 - “With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”