

Sunday, March 12, 2023 Lent 3 ***This is Jesus! Part 3: Jesus Understands Temptations***

Psalm 95 I Corinthians 10:13-22 Genesis 3:1-7 and Matthew 4:1-11

We continue in our Lenten journey with our focus this year being “This is Jesus”. Jesus asked his closest followers “Who do the people say that I am?” As believers, Christians who follow Jesus’ teachings on love and life we are still trying to figure this out—just who is the one we call Jesus- Messiah, Christ? As we seek answers we continue to grow in our faith and understanding of Jesus as our Saviour and Lord. He is the Alpha and Omega—the beginning and the end; he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and he is the teacher, healer miracle maker and he is the one who teaches and understands about everyday life and hope. What do you believe about Jesus? And how does knowing Jesus help you live today?

We have focused on Jesus as Messiah the Christ and is the One who came to forgive us of our sins. He is also the provider for all our needs. And today we learn more about Jesus as one who was tempted just like we are by the evil one, Satan or devil. He was also tempted to disobey God and had experienced the urge to sin. Why did Jesus face temptations because he is fully God and fully human. Jesus was also human and because of this- he faced problems just like you and I, but he did not sin. Jesus can understand everything that you and I go through as he faced all the same challenges including this pull we call temptation. But what is temptation? It is simply the desire or inclination to step outside of God’s will. It is that desire to disobey God that pull that we feel to sin. It is dangerous because whenever one gives into temptation, God’s plan for your life is altered and God then seeks to get you back on track. Temptations offer grand promises yet often what results is disappointment.

Just what are the biggest temptations we face? Food—a temptation to eat too much, to numb pain. Money- desire to get more, to spend it and go into debt; Cheating- in relationships, in school tests and exams, in dishonesty. Partying including drinking and drugs; toys and clothes, there are others too- power, success, workaholism, all in order to be seen as great and idolized. Yes there are many temptations out there but they all fit into three main ideas. I John 2:16 states *“For everything in the world, the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes and the pride of life comes not from the Father but from the world.”*

Desire of the flesh—this is whatever feels good in the moment—food, chocolate, cheating in relationships, drinking too much, doing drugs,

Desire of the eyes-to want more – you see it and you want it—materialism—leads to debt/credit; shopping more stuff;

Pride of life- to be someone=something, status and success, position and power; to be honoured, respected, elevated and loved by all. This might also be where we put ourselves at the center of our lives and assume everything else revolves around us and all we want is success and power. We want others to praise you and a sign of this is workaholism, where you don't stop until you get what you want and it is seen to be great.

Jesus was baptised and was about to start his public ministry. The Spirit leads him into the wilderness to fast, pray and learn what the Spirit will teach him as he continues for 40 days. This wilderness experience is what we are now sharing and calling Lent. We are not doing the same as Jesus- total fasting for the whole time, but Jesus is not eating at all. It is during this time when Jesus is tempted by the devil. It is the devil who tempts Jesus just as it is the evil one who tempts us because God wants you to follow his way. Jesus becomes very hungry and is vulnerable and light headed. He is weak. This is similar to us- for when temptations arise it because we are not focused and clear, but in a weakened state and uncertain of what to do. Jesus is hungry. The devil tells him, "If you are the Son of God, tell the stone to become bread." Jesus knows how to make something out of nothing—we remember his miracle of feeding thousands with 5 loaves. Jesus could have found anything to create sustenance for himself. But this desire for the flesh- to feel good in body is stopped by Jesus' one word 'no'. He said, Man/people do not live by bread alone. Jesus knows that bread is only one part of the human diet. No further discussion takes place.

Then the devil took him up to a high hill and revealed all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. The devil showed him the world and then said, "I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them because they are mine to give to anyone I please.—if you worship me. This is the desire of the eyes- to have. But Jesus comeback line of scripture is—"you must worship the Lord your God and serve only Him".

The devil then took Jesus to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the temple and said "If you're the Son of God- jump. The angels will protect and guard you. They will hold you up and keep you safe." This is the temptation of pride of life. That is, to be the centre of attention and praised. Jesus responded by saying "You must not test the Lord your God."

The devil had finished tempting Jesus and left him until the next opportunity. This is important to note- you never completely defeat temptation; there's always the next thing you see, want and desire. But we are God's people and He will guide us so that we will not be lead into temptation but will be delivered from evil.

If Jesus had given into any of these temptations he would not have been able to fulfill God's purpose for His life. His perfect life and His gift of his life for us would not have been possible. When we give into temptation, we are preventing ourselves from living out God's purpose for our lives because we walk on a path away from God. And if we give into these desires many things may be hurt or lost including relationships, careers, finances, future and our relationship with God.

So how do we overcome these? First, is the desire of the flesh. What we need to do is develop boundaries that honour God and our faith and not give into what might seem to make you feel good for the moment. IF you give into these desires- many are hurt and turn to drugs, drinking or eating to numb pain or ease burdens. Many companies have boundaries set up between workers or between leaders and people. As a Minister I must take a Boundaries course every 5 years—in order to protect me and to protect the people of the church. Boundaries are something you can set up for yourself as well. But you need to be ready to react when you see this happening around you and as you might be put into a difficult situation.

To overcome the desires of the eyes, one lives generously. This is the desire to have more of everything- and don't we all want more? More money, more stuff, more power- but does this lead to being happy? Instead of wanting more all of the time, we need to be living a generous life- giving of oneself. Just think about the generous people that you know—are they happy and healthy? It doesn't seem to make sense but if you give it away you end up having more and what is it that we are giving? Love.

You were created in God's image and God is generous. So if you reflect God than generosity is within you. Just think about how and what you give- time? Energy? Encouragement to others? Sharing of knowledge? When you are tempted in this way—we need to give generously from out of what you have received as blessings from God.

How might one overcome the pride of life that is, how we might we centre our life on God and his word. Just think- pride is the source of sin because we are telling God that our way is better and that we or I am better than God and others. Putting oneself before any other. This temptation of pride of life is what Satan used in the Garden of Eden to tempt Adam and Eve. He said, "If you eat of this fruit, you're going to be like God"- wise and knowledgeable. It is this temptation that got them kicked out of the Garden!

Back to Jesus and the devil. What did Jesus do in each of these three situations where temptation was offered? Jesus replied, "The scriptures say,"...So in order to overcome this pride

of life and any temptation, we need to fight with scripture just like Jesus did! Therefore we should make sure our life is centred on God's word because it is true, unchanging, eternal and stands forever even as you stand strong against temptation. But what do you do? You commit God's word to memory. Because when you are tempted, it is your memory upon which you can rely to see you past those desires and pride.

For me, I like to sing God's scripture and am reminded of songs or phrases with Bible passages in it. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" Ps 119:11 but you can memorize God's word easily by repeating it and sharing it with others. It is in remembering these scriptures kept within your heart that you are prepared for whatever temptation may come and when you have them it is amazing how your mind reacts and moves within!

Whatever the temptations are in your life right now, Jesus understands and he has promised that HE is there and will help you through everything. We read in I Corinthians 10:13 *The temptations in your life are not different from what others experience. God is faithful. HE will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.*

Jesus understands the temptations, desires, wants in your life and he knows that you need God to see you through it. He experienced it and fulfilled his life's purpose. But are you willing to overcome these temptations by doing what is needed so that you will stay on the path God has laid out for your life? Are you seeing Jesus for who He is? This is Jesus and He understands. sLet us be reminded of this as we share in prayer:

Holy God there are many temptations that we each face in this world. We each need your help so that we are not lead into these desires and pride. We pray that you would help us create boundaries. We pray that our desire to read and memorize your word will guide us every day. And we pray that you would help us to live a generous life so that we will be delivered from these temptations. Hear us now in these moments to share those things which call us to you as we seek guidance and strength. SILENCE> in Jesus name we pray for he showed us the way to live. Amen.