Testing the Promises: Jesus' Victory Over Temptation

The story of Adam and Eve reveals a profound truth: even in a sinless world, they succumbed to Satan's temptation. If they could not withstand his influence, it seems unrealistic to expect that we, who are stained by sin, could do better. This raises questions about the notion of "free will" in resisting temptation, highlighting our enslavement to sin. What we truly need is someone who can accomplish what we cannot—someone who can be righteous in God's eyes on our behalf. Jesus is that Savior.

In His ministry, Jesus lays aside His divine glory and power, relying on the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit to resist Satan and remain obedient to God's will. We should live by the Spirit and obey God but our sinful flesh wars against God's will. So Jesus demonstrates that He is the one who takes our place. His 40 days in the wilderness mirrors the 40 years of Israel's wandering.

In Baptism, we are united with Christ, and we too receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit reminds us that Christ's righteousness is sufficient for us. The Apostle Paul poses a crucial question in Romans 6: "Shall we go on sinning?" Our connection to Christ and His righteousness through Baptism signifies that we have died to sin and are called to live a new life in Him. If we genuinely believe this to be true, why would we ever want to embrace sin? Doing so would be like a dog returning to its vomit. Instead, we are invited to embrace the new life that Christ offers—living out the righteousness before God that is ours in Christ.

1. When Satan tempts a starving Jesus with bread, Jesus illustrates that true glory comes not from self-serving actions, but from serving God. He remains steadfastly obedient to God's will, despite every rational inclination suggesting that it would be reasonable for Him to take matters into His own hands. Instead, Jesus patiently follows the Spirit, trusting that God will provide.

   When Satan offers Him all the kingdoms of the world, Jesus reveals an even deeper truth: while Adam and Eve were given dominion over the earth and chose to listen to Satan rather than God, Jesus demonstrates that He is greater than Adam. Finally, Satan takes Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem, where He faces a drop of nearly 100 feet, and tempts Him to leap from the tower. Quoting Scripture (Psalm 91), Satan suggests that God would surely send His angels to catch Jesus, providing an instant spectacle that would confirm His identity as the Messiah. However, this would bypass the cross and the profound truth that Christ's true glory is revealed through suffering.

   Jesus responds by saying, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." What "test" is Jesus referring to?

   The testing of the reliability of God's promises When we challenge God, we are saying, "Prove that you love me. Prove that you have the power." Any challenge to God contains an element of doubt about God's love.

God's plans for us often involve challenges and sacrifices that build our faith and character. Instead of seeking immediate validation, we're invited to trust in God's timing and purpose, even if it means taking a more difficult path. Jesus said, "Take up your cross and follow me." This means that when hardship or suffering comes our way, we don't just whine and complain and stomp our feet. We, instead, ask God: "What is your will for me in the midst of this trial? How shall I serve you through my suffering?"

2. Read Luke 4:13-15. Jesus now begins His ministry in the "power of the Spirit" and contrary to Satan's temptations, how is Jesus actually glorified? Through His Word (teaching).

3. Read Luke 4:16-19. Why is it significant that Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath "as was His custom"? Jesus is faithfully honors the 3rd Commandment. He is led by the Spirit, so this is where the Spirit wanted Him! What about us?

4. In a single stroke, Jesus claimed to be the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament. How did he do this?

He quoted a well-known passage from Isaiah that clearly referred to the promised Savior. Then he said that he was personally fulfilling those prophecies.

5. Read Luke 4:20-30. When the people heard Jesus, some said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" What does this short question reveal about their attitude toward Jesus?
Their familiarity with Jesus was getting in the way of their looking at Him objectively, that is, as someone who should be worshiped. They wanted Jesus to jump to their demand for proof. Jesus quickly got to the heart of their unbelief.

What does this passage reveal about the danger of familiarity with Jesus and how it can lead to rejection? How can we, like the crowd, sometimes limit Jesus' work in our lives by our own preconceived notions? The people of Nazareth had seen Jesus grow up—He seemed so ordinary. They wanted proof that He was something more. We, one the other hand, have heard our whole lives who Jesus really is. We have the testimony of the Gospels and the apostles. But sometimes when trouble or tragedy comes into our lives, we might wonder "I though you loved me, Jesus?" We easily forget who He truly is—one who come to suffer and die and rise again to give us eternal life, not to fix all our worldly problems.

6. Why did Jesus refer to the stories of Elijah and Elisha (widow of Zarephath, Naaman the Syrian)?

Israel had rejected God. So God sent his prophets to bless non-Jews. The same thing was happening in Nazareth. The Jews of his hometown would not believe in him, and their unbelief robbed them of the blessings that could have been theirs.

Isaiah 55 – rain shower—once it's past, it's past. Don't let the opportunities God gives for grace pass.

7. What ironic thing happens as they are about to throw Jesus off the cliff?

Jesus performs a miracle by walking right through them.

His "hour" has not yet come. He "went on his way". That journey will lead to another crowd and, at the right "hour", the cross.