

# “If You Are A Child of God”

## Matthew 4:1-11

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup> The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

<sup>4</sup> Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. <sup>6</sup> “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:

“He will command his angels concerning you,

and they will lift you up in their hands,

so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”

<sup>7</sup> Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. <sup>9</sup> “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

<sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

## Context:

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

1. Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness. This resembles Israel’s 40 years in the wilderness. The wilderness is a season where they had to completely depend on the Lord’s provision, protection, and direction. It was a season to teach Israel to humble themselves and commit themselves to God wholeheartedly.
2. Unfortunately, instead of being grateful and trusting the Lord in obedience, Israel complained and grumbled; they were arrogant, ungrateful, selfish. They failed to trust and obey God in the wilderness. In his temptation in the wilderness, Jesus did perfectly what Israel failed to do. He trusted and obeyed God.
3. Jesus defeated each of these temptations by citing a passage of Scripture that had a reference Israel’s temptation in the wilderness. Right from the beginning of his ministry, Jesus was determined and committed to fulfil his mission, to fulfil the calling that Israel failed miserably.

## Matthew 3:16-17

<sup>16</sup> As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. <sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

4. The temptation of Jesus happened after his baptism. During the baptism of Jesus, the voice of God affirmed the identity and mission of Jesus. The temptation is a response to that affirmation. The devil was trying to tempt Jesus to doubt and misuse his sonship and disregard his mission. The enemy comes to distract us away from God.

## “If You Are the Son of God”

<sup>3</sup> *The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God,*

<sup>6</sup> *“If you are the Son of God,”*

Satan taunts Jesus for his sonship. As the Son of God, Jesus has the power to make stones into bread or call for angels to protect him. But, Jesus did not comply to the demands of Satan. Jesus was secure in his relationship with the Father. He was clear of his mission, and he was not interested in proving his sonship by displaying power. Jesus knew his Father; Jesus loved his Father, and he was committed to trust and obey the Father, and in fact, his obedience was the greatest evidence of the sonship of Jesus.

### **Provisions: “tell these stones to become bread” (vv. 3-4)**

<sup>3</sup> *The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”*

<sup>4</sup> *Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”*

1. Jesus was hungry. He fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. Instead of being supernaturally sustained, Jesus experienced one of humanity’s most basic need. Satan seized the opportunity to tempt Jesus to use his power to meet his basic needs.
2. In answering the devil, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3.

#### **Deuteronomy 8:2-5**

<sup>2</sup> *Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. <sup>3</sup> He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. <sup>4</sup> Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. <sup>5</sup> Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.*

3. In the wilderness, God allowed the Israelites to experience hunger. Food was scarce. Israel was supposed to trust in the Lord’s provision. God had just miraculously saved them from Egypt, with the 10 plagues, the parting of the sea, and the promise to bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey. Yet, when Israel experienced a tiny bit of suffering, they succumbed to their fleshly desires; they complained, and rather go back to Egypt. Israel failed to trust in the God who delivered them.
4. When Jesus was in the wilderness, he faced the same hunger and scarcity. The devil tempted him to meet his own need of hunger. But, Jesus was clear that he was not going to use his power for self-interest, he was confident that God will take care of him. His trust led him to respond in obedience towards God, relying on God’s provision, instead of taking things into his own hands.
5. *“Man shall not live on bread alone”*: Jesus was not denying the importance of food. But Jesus was confronting its exclusive importance. Later in his ministry, Jesus provided food for the 5000 and the 4000. Yet, he also confronts those who follow him only for physical food.

6. In resisting the temptation, Jesus showed that even the Son of God does not need to have all his needs met.
  - How does this truth affect the way we perceive our needs?

### **Testing the Lord: “throw yourself down” (vv. 5-7)**

<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. <sup>6</sup> “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”

<sup>7</sup> Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

1. The temple was a place where God dwells in. The temple is believed to be a place of refuge because God is there. If God would to rescue anyone, surely he will do so at the temple where he dwells in.
2. Just as Jesus uses Scriptures, Satan uses God’s word to tempt us too. Satan challenged Jesus to throw himself down from the temple, quoting scripture (Psalm 91:11-12) that God will send angels to protect him. But, Satan quoted the passage out of context. Psalm 91 speaks to those who find refuge in God, that they need not fear because the Lord will protect them from harm. It does not speak about putting yourself in danger so that the Lord would rescue you.
3. Jesus answered, “Do not put the Lord your God to test.” He quotes this from Deuteronomy 6:16, “<sup>16</sup> Do not put the LORD your God to the test as you did at Massah.” The incident in Massah happened in Exodus chapter 17, where the Israelites again grumbled against the Lord for the lack of water. In the chapter before, the Lord had just provided manna and quail, but they had not been humbled, they had not learned to trust the Lord, and they demanded the Lord to provide water. To ask for water in the dessert was not wrong, but the way they complained and make demands showed that they have not changed.

#### **Exodus 17:7**

<sup>7</sup> And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

- \* Massah means testing
- \* Meribah means quarrelling

4. The Lord has given us the privilege to be his children. But, Satan will cause us to doubt or misuse this privilege. He will tempt us by twisting the word of God.
  - Have we taken God’s word out of context? Why is that dangerous?

### **The Splendour of the World: “if you will bow down and worship me” (vv. 8-10)**

<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. <sup>9</sup> “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

1. The mission of Jesus was to contend over the dominion over this world, over the loyalty of the people of the world, and his enemy is Satan. When Satan offers Jesus the world, he is asking Jesus to compromise, since the end goal is the same. But the means to the end is different. One is to faithfully obey God, and that means to eventually suffer and die for the people he came to save; the other one seems much easier, to just bow down to Satan.
2. The temptation seems enticing. Jesus would not need to suffer and die, and he would still rule over the kingdom of the world. But, what Satan is really asking is total allegiance. Satan does not want Jesus to be the Son of God. Satan wants Jesus to disown God, and hence ceased to be the Son of God that comes to save the world. And for Jesus to bow down to Satan would mean that he would be a puppet for Satan, and the kingdom of the world would not really belong to Jesus.
3. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:13 in his reply.

**Deuteronomy 6:13-15**

<sup>13</sup> Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. <sup>14</sup> Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; <sup>15</sup> for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land.

4. The Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt, the Lord had provided for every of their need and miraculously sustained them, and the Lord would drive out the inhabitants of Canaan, in order to bring them in to the land that the Lord had promised them. It is in this context that the Lord demands Israel’s wholehearted commitment in worship and obedience – towards a good God who loves them. On the other hand, Satan is selfish, prideful, and all he cares for is himself. To bow down to someone like this would mean becoming a slave to a tyrant master who would use and abuse you for his gains. When we put God and Satan side-by-side, it looks completely ridiculous that we would choose to serve the self-seeking devil as compared to a good and compassionate God.
5. Our temptation is to compromise, to change the world by becoming like the world:

“Serve the devil and rule the world. In modern terms, be practical, realistic, ready to compromise; ‘the end justifies the means’. To help people you must get position and power.” (Filson)

6. Satan is tempting us to make our relationship with God superficial and worldly. He perverts the relationship we have with God. His goal is to make our relationship with God a transaction.
7. Jesus commanded Satan to leave him alone. Jesus was clear that he was not going to listen to Satan. Jesus wasn’t focused on the privileges that comes with the status of a son, but he was committed to be faithful in his obedience towards God. Sonship was a relationship with the Father based on love. It was not about what he could get out of it.

## Jesus, Our High Priest

Jesus remained sinless, and he became our high priest who understands our temptations and suffering.

### Hebrews 2:18

*<sup>18</sup> Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

### Hebrews 4:15–16

*<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

### Hebrews 5:7–10

*<sup>7</sup> During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. <sup>8</sup> Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered <sup>9</sup> and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him <sup>10</sup> and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.*

The Lord does not promise us a life without temptations or challenges. Yet, he gives us the One who had gone through it successfully. We can look to him, trusting that he loves us enough to have gone through these temptations and he loves us enough to have embraced the suffering that he could have avoided if he wanted to. We can be assured that our prayers, petitions, and cries are heard.

## Prayer Items

- Understand the true nature of “sonship”: Be careful not to be tempted to doubt or misuse our privileges as children of God
  - “Man shall not live by bread alone”: To trust the Lord to provide and protect; our faith will be built on God, even when our needs are not met
  - To resist the temptation to compromise, to become like the world
- Hebrews 4:15–16, <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

### Church

- Hunger for the Presence and the Word of God.
- Transformative work of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God.
- Church to faithful to welcome and minister to all the people that God sends.
- Church to be a place of healing, restoration and reconciliation.
- Unity based on God’s love and truth: breaking barriers between people from different groups.
- Workplaces: labourers to respond to their calling in the harvest field.
- Wisdom to use our resources to help those who are in need.
- Salvation for our loved ones.
- Ministries:
  - Open doors
  - Wisdom and discernment to reach out and minister
  - Sensitive to the needs of the people

### Covid-19

- Healing and deliverance
- Schools: students, teachers and staffs
- Government: wisdom and compassion
- Economy; those who are out of work
- Mental health (deprive of relationships)
- India

### Healing

- Francis: recovery from surgery
- Suba: severe headaches
- Shanti: backache
- Samuel: plans to return to India affected

### Malaysia

- Leadership: righteousness, integrity, compassion for the people
- Unity: between all people group
- Salvation
- Care for the neglected group of people (the poor, marginalized, foreigners)
- Church: instruments of love and unity, prophetic voice to the nation