

From the Ashes - Temptation

Big Idea: ***Jesus experienced temptation of every kind and was able to overcome it. His example teaches us*** what we need to know in battling temptation and rising above it in our own lives.

Prayer: *“I know that I’m not immune to the temptations of life. God, remind me of how you feel about me. Protect me from the dead-end road of worldly gain and keep my eyes on the eternal reward. Help me to practice patience, delayed gratification, simplicity, and sacrifice that I might experience fully the life you have for me. Amen.”*

1 Corinthians 10:13 - No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.

Intro: Handout chocolate/peanut butter eggs as people enter sanctuary, instruct them **do not eat the chocolate**. Tell them that they have to wait. At the beginning of my message invite the congregation to unwrap and smell the chocolate, **but not eat it**.

- Ask how many are feeling tempted to eat the chocolate.
- Christian’s will give up all kinds of things as a way to embrace the sacrifice of Jesus. Over the next 40 days (Lent)

Today we begin a 5-week sermon series called ***From the Ashes***.

Our lives can sometimes feel like a disappointing pile of ashes. ***We can be broken, shattered, and destroyed.***

The good news of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection is that we can experience new life.

- **Our lives**, no matter how bad before, are never irredeemable. Said another way, **you are not broken beyond repair**.

In and through Christ, you can rise above the ashes and experience abundant life.

This *isn't* just a series for the broken and shattered - this is for *anyone who wants to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Christ*. Each week we will look at *one aspect of Jesus' life and ministry* during His time here on earth and what we can learn from Him.

We begin this week with *a conversation about temptation*. Did you know that immediately preceding the start of Jesus' earthly ministry, he experienced a **40-day period of temptation?**

- While resisting the temptation of free chocolate on your seat is difficult, can you even imagine a *persistent and prolonged season* of it?
- And, as an added bonus, the person **overseeing your temptation** is none other than *the devil himself?*
- I cannot even imagine what this would have felt like, looked like, or been like to endure.
- And yet, this is the exact scenario that Jesus had to overcome.

We begin today with a look into *this season of Jesus' life* and how we can learn from and be encouraged by the fortitude of our savior.

First and foremost, today **we all need to acknowledge that *temptation should be expected in our lives***. We all experience temptation each and every day. **No one is immune** from the desire to have things or do things that do not align with the way of Christ.

Temptation comes in many forms, and in many ways, it can seem innocent enough.

Sneaking in some social media time at work, binging that extra show on Netflix, shaving a few dollars of income off your tax return... In the eyes of many, these don't seem like huge problems, *but it's the little foxes that spoil the vine. (Song of Songs 2:15)* And believe me, when I say that *the temptations and desires behind these actions can grow into big problems*.

This can lead to things that we all would agree are **devastating**; Broken marriages, ruined relationships, careers in the toilet, ministries closing down, the list goes on and on.

It does us no good to pretend like we are immune to temptation. Or to think that we can handle things on our own.

Walking in the light - 1 John 1:8-10 - "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us."

Today, **let's begin by confessing and acknowledging that we all deal with temptation in our lives** and that there are times when we follow temptation down paths that are neither Christ-honoring nor consistent with our heavenly citizenship.

**How do we manage temptation? How do we respond to temptation?
*How do we model the fortitude and endurance Jesus had?***

It begins with your identity

Before we look at the temptation of Christ in Matthew 4, we need to talk about the event that immediately preceded his 40-day temptation in the wilderness.

Matthew 3:13-17, and the *baptism of Jesus*;

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

*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. And a voice from heaven said, "**This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.**"*

The baptism of Christ is an incredibly significant moment for many reasons. But for us today, I want you to focus on verse 17 when God says, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.**"**

Notice God the father didn't say, "Good! Now go and fulfill your destiny on Earth!" Or, "This is my son, watch out Satan and demons and all the other spiritual wickedness because He's coming for you!"

No, none of that. He simply said, "***this is my Son.***" And we know ***God loves His son and is pleased with Him.***

- This is Christ's identity.
- He is a beloved Son of God most high.

This is such a powerful reality that when Jesus is drawn into the wilderness this is the very ***first thing that Satan tries to call into question***. He tries ***to tempt Jesus*** out of His identity and position. Look at what He says,

Matthew 4:3 - "The tempter came and said to Him, 'If you are the Son of God...'"

- For Jesus, the tempter said, ***If you are the Son of God.***
- For Eve, in the garden, it was, ***Did God really say...***

What does this voice sound like in your life?

- ***If you really were a Christian you wouldn't...***
- ***If you really loved God...***
- ***If you were only more like x, y, or z...***
- ***If you were really saved you wouldn't be suffering like you are...***

The questions may be different for all of us but the motive is always the same. The motive is to **get us doubting our identity and position** AND get us **doubting who God is...**

When dealing with temptation, always remember who you are & whose you are!

Let's look at the **three specific areas** Jesus was tempted while in the wilderness.

***Provision - We've all agreed temptation is something everyone deals with. We also realize questioning our identity is a primary tactic of our enemy.**

Matthew 4:3-4 - And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

- **Have you ever been really hungry? Jesus must've been really hungry** after 40 days in the wilderness
- I can't even imagine how famished Jesus must've been after his 40-day journey in the wilderness.

First temptation (provision) - It's just cruel that Satan would come to him, **question His identity**, and then challenge Him to turn stones into bread.

What was the underlying need Satan was trying to manipulate?

- The need Jesus had, (that we all share) is **a need for provision**.
- It was food in Jesus' case, but it's also finances, clothes, a home to live in...
- However, in all these things **we look to God and we trust He will supply all we need**.

Philippians 4:19 - *"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus."*

Psalms 23:1 - *"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."*

- A good shepherd will always supply for the needs of his flock.
- A good Father supplies for the needs of his kids.

We have a good shepherd, a good father, and we can trust our needs will be met.

God can be trusted, and His Word is what gives us life: not food, finances, relationships, or things.

****Protection - Matthew 4:5-7** - Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him 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, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, ***'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'***"

The second temptation of Jesus seems to be focused on inviting Jesus to test God's protection of His beloved son.

- Jesus, **having confidence** in the care and concern for His well-being by God, saw no need to do such a foolish thing.
- In fact, **Jesus brings up a very important principle**, that *we should not test the Lord.*

But if we're honest, we often feel tempted to do foolish things simply *because we know God is a God of grace*, and He can pick up the pieces of a bad decision.

- Yes, we know He will protect.
- Yes, He can work all things for the good.
- Yes, He is omnipotent and nothing can derail His will.

Sometimes you simply need to say "**NO**" to the voice of temptation in your life.

Psalm 46:1 - *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."*

*****Position - Matthew 4:8-11** - 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 I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him

The third and final temptation is for Jesus to worship Satan

- And in doing so, ***He would receive dominion over all the kingdoms*** of the world.
- It seems like an easy enough choice, but for some, ***the temptation for position and power is overwhelming.***

We are often given a choice to worship something other than God in order to get ahead or receive worldly gain.

- The significance that comes from worshipping an idol of any kind is temporary and temporal.

CLOSE:

We too must choose to **worship God alone and trust in the significance** that can only come from our relationship with Him.

- As a beloved son or daughter of the Most High King, **you will inherit an eternal kingdom** and it cannot be shaken.
- Oftentimes **we forget or look past this reality** as believers and get distracted by worldly gain.
- But truth be told, **the best is yet to come.**

When feeling tempted in this area, try to keep things in perspective;

Matthew 6:33 - *“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

Application

One glaring thing was consistent every time the devil tempted Jesus; Jesus responded with scripture.

The Word of God is powerful. Hebrews 4:12 says; *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*

As we journey together over the next 5 weeks, **I’d like to encourage you to commit to daily time in the Word.** *Making this a daily habit can literally transform your life.*

- You could read a Proverb every day! You could give up your evening TV.
- You could set your alarm 30 minutes early for the word.
- You could read the word together over breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

But here’s what we know, if scripture was sufficient for Jesus, then it is for us too.

Let’s pray together.