

Sermon – Luke 4 – The Temptation of Jesus. Rev. Bruce Stanley

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.

He's also enclosed himself in a block of ice in Times Square for 63 hours.

And 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 does it, he says, 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. Maybe not as amazing as David Blaine. But pretty good. 40 days in the desert without food.

But Jesus' desert famine is not a test of endurance. It is in fact a battle ground for the Kingdom of God. Satan hates the Kingdom of God and this is Satan's attempt to stop Jesus going to the cross to save humanity.

And so Satan throws every trick and deceit at Jesus, starting with his 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 words that God spoke to the Israelites while **they** were in the desert – words he used to tell 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. 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 says to Jesus "All this world can be yours... if you just bow down to me."

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

III – Sometimes when you buy something second hand, it says: "AS IS". Like this apple iphone I found on ebay:

Black iPhone 3G... It's been through the washing machine, and the screen is hazy, ... Aside from the water damage, it's in very good condition, with no major scratches even though the warranty is voided. I'm selling it **as-is**, definitely good for parts, possibly usable.

Satan is offering Jesus the kingdoms of the world “AS IS”. A broken and sinful world. Aside from the sin problem, it’s in very good condition! If he just bows down to Satan. Again, Satan is trying to move Jesus away from the cross. To stop him dealing with sin.

What Satan is saying is “take the world as it is now. Forget about the problem of sin. Forget about the suffering of the cross. Have it all now. AS IS. And Jesus replies in 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. 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! **If you are** the son of God, God will protect you!”

He’s saying to Jesus – Jump off and MAKE God protect you! Put your sonship to the test! Jesus replies, verse 12:

12Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

That’s **another** verse from Deuteronomy, 6:16 – remembering the time when Israel tested God again and again as they wandered in the desert for 40 years. They **demand** God provide them with water. And with food. And with safety. They did not TRUST God to provide what they needed. They demanded 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 knows not to **test** God, but to **trust** him.

Apply...

Every temptation was designed to attack Jesus’ relationship with his Father and to stop Jesus going to the cross. To be disobedient to God. 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. He came to deal with sin and to rescue us and nothing was going to stop him from that mission. Satan could not stop the work of Jesus on the cross. And so now, **Satan turns to us**. To each one of us. Satan works on each of us with these very same temptations in **our** lives, to turn **us** away from the cross, one at a time.

So what do these temptations look like in our lives today and how can we be challenged?

“Satisfy Yourself”

The kingdom of this world is **immersed** in self satisfaction. We can buy whatever we want and if we have no money, we have a credit card. It's easy to satisfy ourselves in this world. The question is: What does God want us to be satisfied **with**? I'm sure God doesn't mind us having a comfy bed to sleep in, or a roof over our head, or a TV set. But he doesn't want us to be **satisfied** with these material things. **Man does not live by bread alone.** What's the rest of that quote from Deuteronomy? ... **“but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”** God wants us to find satisfaction in his words, in his promises. To be satisfied by depending on him to provide all we need.

I'm sure 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 a radio, or a car, or running water, or a flushing toilet, or a fridge, or electricity. But could we even go 40 days without buying luxuries? I wonder if that's a challenge we could meet? I'm doing that starting today. No chocolate, no coffee, no alcohol, new clothes or CDs or any luxury times, for 40 days. Not to prove myself. Not for “lent”. But to take that time to learn to turn to God and his Word when I need something. Rather than satisfy my worldly kingdom needs, I'm going to think about my Spiritual needs. I'm going to turn to God instead of turning to the shopping centre. I'm going to open my Bible instead of opening my wallet. Instead of over-eating, I'm going to over-pray. Instead of stocking up on the world's riches, I'm going to stock up on God's riches. I want to challenge you to think about how you find your satisfaction. What do you turn to each day to be satisfied? Is it God and his Word? Or is it the things of this world's kingdom?

[And for the parents among us – what are your children learning from you each day about being satisfied?]

“Worldly kingdom”

Second, the temptation of worldly kingdoms. Satan offers Jesus the kingdoms of the world, “AS IS”, if he bows down. When we accept the leadership of money in our life, we are bowing down to Satan. When we are seduced by the desire to have power, we are bowing down to Satan. When we indulge in a life of riches and the pursuit of worldly happiness and values, we bow down to Satan and give **him** leadership in our lives. When we bow the knee to money, we bow the knee to Satan. Satan shows us the world and says: “You can have it all!” Touch it, feel it, hold it, own it. But bow down to me. If we want to stop bowing to Satan, we need to find value in the Kingdom of God and the way of the cross that offers us freedom from sin.

“Demanding from God”

Finally, the temptation of testing God. Putting demands on God. Demanding protection. Demanding good things. Demanding an easy life. Demanding happiness, safety, a good job. It's one thing to **pray** for these things. It's another thing to **demand** them from God. Satan says: “Throw yourself down and IF GOD LOVES YOU, then God will catch you. If God loves you, if you're a child of God, he will keep you safe from harm and make your life easy.”

But the way of the cross is often hard. It's a road of self denial, a road that leads to struggles and pain and difficult decisions. It's NOT always easy. And God may NOT always choose to **make** it easy for us. To put demands on God is to deny the way of the cross – to deny trusting God, no matter what difficult road he leads us on.

I think it's important to understand how serious these temptations are for us each day. And to realise that although we cannot overcome them completely in this world, Jesus has already overcome them for us. So when we fail, he can offer us forgiveness. But every day as we face these temptations, we must recognise that Satan will never stop trying to divide us from our heavenly Father. He will never stop trying to convince us that we know better than God. He will never stop trying to blur our focus on the cross of Jesus.

Let's pray.