

## Sermon: Matthew 3: The temptation of Jesus”

Rev. Bruce Stanley.

Sermon text and audio available for download at [www.waitara.anglican.asn.au](http://www.waitara.anglican.asn.au)

### • III – New Year’s resolutions...

Another year. Another fresh start. Another time to make plans. What are you going to achieve this year? What’s got to be “done” in 2012? ...

5 of the top resolutions for 2012:

1. Lose weight
2. Get organised
3. Spend less, save more
4. Stay fit and healthy
5. Spend more time with family

Most people give up on their new year resolutions within a month. I think it’s because we get busy quickly. And distracted. And tired. Weak. By the end of January, 6 weeks of school holidays, I feel weak! And when you’re weak it’s easy to give up on things.

In Matthew 4, Matthew tells us the story of Jesus’ temptation by the devil. Jesus spends 40 days and 40 nights without food in the wilderness. And the thing to remember here is that Jesus is God as a man on earth. He is human. He feels what we feel. He feels hungry and tired and weak. Just like you or I would in the desert for 40 days and nights without food. I can’t imagine that. SO tired. SO hungry. SO weak. (I did the 40 hour famine once...) And that’s when the devil arrives to tempt him.

And that’s the devil. 1 Peter 5:8 describes the devil as a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” That’s why this passage is such a helpful one for us. We can ask the question: how does Jesus handle the devil? As a weak, tired human, how does Jesus deal with the Devil’s attacks and temptations?

### 3 temptations:

#### • 1<sup>st</sup> temptation:

1. Eat now!

The first thing the devil says to Jesus: You’re hungry. Here are some rocks – turn them into bread and eat! Your Father hasn’t provided you with food – get it yourself.

The first temptation is for Jesus to satisfy his immediate needs ... by himself. DON’T wait on God. DON’T trust God. Take it yourself NOW.

And Jesus quotes to him from Deuteronomy 8:3 – from the time the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, hungry, after being set free from Pharaoh in Egypt. And they grumble against God saying: Where is our food?! Have you brought us out of Egypt to die from hunger?! And God provided them with manna., and He reminds them: Man does not live by bread alone.

We often have that temptation to give up on God. We can grumble that we don’t have what we need and to stop relying and depending on God to provide for us. But if we turn to God’s word, we find that God DOES provide all our

needs. We CAN trust him to provide what we need. Most of all, we CAN trust that HE knows us better than we know ourselves.

So that's the first temptation. Don't trust God to provide your needs. Don't wait on him. Just complain or grumble or just go and get it yourself.

But what we NEED to do is listen to God, from his Word, and WAIT on his answers. WAIT on him to provide. TRUST him to provide.

- **Temptation 2:**

2. Jump now!

The second thing the devil says is: jump off the top of this temple and see if God catches you!

Jesus second temptation is to test God. To test if God is faithful. Just to make sure that God will actually look after him. To test God's protection.

And again Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy. 6:16 – again from when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness. This time they were thirsty and complained to Moses at Massah – “Did you bring us out of Egypt to die of thirst?! Give us water to drink!!” They demanded water. They demanded God provide for them. They put God to the test.

When we put God to the test, again, we lack trust. We believe that God should answer our call. That God should bow to us and give us what we demand. We demand things from him – a new job, a better life, healing from sickness, financial security – and we test God. We challenge him to do what we ask.

**III** – Genie in a bottle. Have you ever wondered what it would be like to have a Genie that could grant you all your wishes? Just a blink of the eye and you have a new car, a new job, a clean bill of health...

Sometimes we can treat God like a Genie in a bottle. Someone who's there at our calling. Ready to jump in and give us what we ask for. And each time we ask God for something, instead of testing our faith in him, we're testing HIM. We put God to the test. We say: “God, if you are God, do this for me!”

Who are we to do that? To demand from God. To put him to the test.

- In Ecclesiastes 5:2 it says: *“Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few... stand in awe of God”*

Are you testing God? Demanding things from him? Are you jumping off to see what God will do and pushing him to respond? Often, we are quick to put God to the test, to call on him to grant our wishes, when we should be taking more time to stand in awe of Him. To let our words be few and listen to Him.

- **Temptation 3:**

3. Take now!

The final temptation of the devil is to offer Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. Look at all this Jesus. Fall down and worship me now and you can have all of this now!

The third temptation is to offer Jesus the world NOW. Have all that you see now. Of course, everything already belongs to Jesus. But for now, he's human. After he dies and rises, he will again be with his Father in heaven, reigning over all the kingdoms of the earth. So what's the devil offering him? The devil is offering him and way out – skip the human pain, avoid the crucifixion. Give up on your mission to save the world and you can have all this now.

III – Jelly beans – You can say to a child: You can have 1 jellybean now. Or if you wait 5 minutes, you can have the whole packet... what will they do? My 4 year old – will eat the 1 jelly bean straight away. Then scream because he can't have the rest of the packet!

So often, we are tempted to give up the real prize by taking something of far less value right now. To settle for the riches of the world which are temporary, rather than wait for the gift of heaven which is eternal.

Jesus responds with Deuteronomy 6:13 – “Worship God and serve him only!” Again from the time of Israel wandering in the wilderness. They're about to enter the land. And God says to Israel – when you enter this land, worship me only. You are to have no other gods.

Our world offers us so much right now. But all the kingdoms of this world are passing away. What God offers us is an eternity in heaven. But it's so easy to see the riches around us and fill up on what we can have NOW, rather than wait for the riches God has planned for us. That's why the reminder is to worship him only. God wants us to focus on the riches he has for us, rather than the riches of the world.

The third temptation is to forget about the future and take what you can have now.

- Three temptations:
  1. Look after yourself, don't wait on God.
  2. Test God – make him your Genie in a bottle.
  3. Take what you can now – forget about the future God has planned for you.

The devil WAITS until we're tired, and weak, and vulnerable. And he tempts us with these things. Don't wait for God. Test Him. Take now.

## • TRUST

Our New Year resolution every year should be just this:

Trust God! (**refer to verses on sermon outline**).

Trust his plans for our life. Trust him to provide for us. Trust his promises. Trust his future for us. Trust his Word. We give in to temptation when we take our trust away from God. When we're tempted to sin, whether it's physical or spiritual, we're actually being tempted to reduce or remove our trust in God. The question we need to ask, when we are tempted, is: Why am I not trusting God with this?

Four things Jesus' response teaches us:

1. **Wait** for God's answers. Don't rush in yourself. Wait for God to answer. And listen for his answers.
2. Be careful not to place **your** demands or expectations on God. That just ends up with us putting ourselves and our opinions above God. Instead, **stand in awe** of Him.
3. **Keep focussed** on heaven, and don't be distracted by the immediate satisfaction of the things of this world – because they won't last.
4. And finally – you cannot do any of these above 3 things without God's help. **Pray** always. Read his **Word**, know his Word, make that Bible reading plan an important part of each day. And allow his **Holy Spirit** to be at work in your life to be changing you each day to be more like Jesus – a person who TRUSTS God completely.

Let's pray.