

## “Walking on the Wild Side” – Pr Sprengle – Lent 1 – February 26, 2023

- I. **Matthew 4:1** - <sup>1</sup> Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
- II. **Jesus began His public ministry after He was baptized.**
  - a. For roughly 30 years of His life, He was preparing to carry out the mission of God, and His baptism and temptation marked the beginning of that work.
  - b. It's interesting that the very first thing on the schedule is a baptism for the sins of others.... And then being led out into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by the devil.
  - c. My seminary professor, Jeff Gibbs makes a good point about this – that God tempts no one (James 1:13), but in this case, God the Father allowed Satan to tempt Jesus under extreme circumstances.
    - i. You see, Jesus is experiencing the failure of Israel as they went through their baptism in the parting of the Red Sea and 40 years of testing in the desert... Only He is baptized and then tempted... and He gets it right.
    - ii. I said this last week, and I will say it again, Jesus had to be the perfect sacrifice – He had to do everything right that we all fail to do because of sin.
  - d. So, the devil goes into an all-out assault on Jesus, tempting Him with things like basic needs of food... twisting Scripture to use the Father's love as a test... and the pride of wealth and power.
    - i. I've fasted for more than 24 hours, but 40 days is brutal.
      1. Not to mention, the wilderness (which is just a rocky desert) is extreme – hot and cold, wild animals, no place to find shelter.
      2. Now, the devil tempts Jesus to use His divine powers when He's in need – You are God, just make these stones into bread and have a little food...(like the people wandering in the desert as the manna came down.)
      3. Can you imagine how many times Jesus would be tempted to just make things better throughout His life by using His divinity?
        - a. All the times He would be hungry, have no place lined up to stay, or at the end when He was suffering immensely?
      4. But Jesus resists the devil by Scripture, knowing that living by God's will and Word is the most important thing.
    - ii. Next the devil changes the meaning of God's Word to tempt Jesus to put the Father's love to the test.
      1. Satan takes Jesus to the sanctuary... a place of refuge and the presence of God... and tells Him to jump off the high point.

2. If God really meant what He said, then the angels will keep Jesus safe... which I suppose would gain Jesus some notoriety and fame as people saw Him gently land from 100 feet up.
  3. So Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:16 – do not put God to the test... which means that Jesus trusts the Father unconditionally, and throwing yourself off a building to be sure is not trusting fully!
- iii. Finally, satan uses riches and power to tempt Jesus.
1. The only requirement to attain all the riches of the world was to worship the devil – bowing down to him.
  2. Again, quoting from Deuteronomy 6:13, Jesus uses Scripture to reject the temptation to break the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment – You shall have no other Gods... and “you shall not bow down to them or serve them” (Exodus 20:3-5)
  3. As the Israelites before Jesus had done for centuries in bowing down to foreign gods and idols – Jesus would not fall for that temptation.
- e. Jesus overcame the wilderness, the deprivation, the loneliness, the hunger, and the temptations so He could be our champion – the one who overcame satan and his attacks for our sake.

### III. **Jesus walked on the wild side to free us from the power of satan.**

- a. On our own, we cannot overcome the evil one – we don’t stand a chance.
- b. God does not tempt us, but satan, the world and our own sinful flesh are constantly at work trying to trip us up and walk away from God’s will.
- c. In fact, satan has already tripped us up and attacked us – and the season of Lent is a time to reflect upon these things.
- d. In Genesis 3 we read where the trouble began, and the result of sin in this world would leave us helpless and walking through a difficult and painful wilderness.
- e. Contrary to popular belief, the wild side is not the fun side... it’s just living in the filth and waste of sin and its consequences.
  - i. That’s the hopelessness that comes from sin and death and satan – we cannot by our own power overcome them or fight them alone.
- f. The curse of sin and death came into the world by Adam, and the devil enjoyed that victory because he knew what kind of misery and destruction that would bring.
  - i. It always amazes me how sinful human beings can create new ways to hurt each other and destroy the world around them.
  - ii. It also amazes me every time I hear about a new disease or condition that can kill us – the list of medical problems is endless.
  - iii. No place is safe – because if sinful people or your own frail body doesn’t turn on you – the environment will.

1. We face dangers from earthquakes, tsunamis, tornados and blizzards – and no amount of doomsday prepping will save us from a natural disaster if it's bad enough.
- g. Sin and death are always coming at us, but also satan himself.
  - i. 1 Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."
  - ii. His attacks are sometimes subtle and sometimes overt.
  - iii. Listen to what Jesus says about him, "He [the devil] was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44)
    1. Again, the subtle nature of satan is to get everyone to believe his lies – especially the ones that stand against the will of God.
    2. How often we are tempted to reject God's Word for the lies of the world?
      - a. Normalizing things that God calls sin – so that people see it as some kind of "badge of honor" to walk on the wild side.
    3. Just as satan twisted Scripture around to trap Jesus in sin, he is still using that technique with us.
- h. So where do we go... what do we do?
  - i. It is hopeless if we have no God and no way out of the wilderness.
  - ii. But we do... our way is Jesus Christ – "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." (John 14:6)

#### IV. **All other roads lead to destruction.**

- a. The only way to the Father and salvation comes from Jesus.
- b. The only power to defeat sin, death and satan comes from the work accomplished by Jesus as the perfect human being, but also as God Himself dwelling among us.
- c. Jesus was sent from the eternal paradise of heaven to become a human being who walked on the wild side of sin, death and the attacks of satan... for you, for me... to crush satan's head and claim the victory.
- d. Jesus suffered throughout His life, being tempted in every way we are, along with dying a brutal death, only to be crowned in glory (Hebrews 2:14-18) as the victor... and through faith we are too!
- e. Our only hope is that God takes away the power of sin to condemn us... death to destroy us forever... and satan to receive us into hell.
- f. So walk in the victory... walk in the confidence that Jesus went through these things to give us hope and a future.
- g. Lent gives us the perfect opportunity to reflect upon our Savior, as He walked into the wild side and defeated our enemies. Amen.