

Just Say No (Part 1)

Introduction

The Text

¹ And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ² for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. ³ The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” ⁴ And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’” ⁵ And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶ and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. ⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” ⁸ And Jesus answered him, “It is written, “‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’” ⁹ And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰ for it is written, “‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’” ¹¹ and “‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” ¹² And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ¹³ And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time. (Luke 4:1–13)

- A. Before I pray this morning, let me open with a few thoughts that will hopefully make clear to you why I even open up my sermons with prayer in the first place.

The Devil’s in the Details

- A. We live in a post-Enlightenment world. A world where the spiritual has given way to the rational and the natural. In respectable circles of our day, there is no longer any talk of Satan or demons (or God for that matter). That is all pre-Enlightenment superstition and silliness—like believing in the Bogey Man or Goblins. Modern man knows better.
 - 1. As we touched on last week, our problems are all now horizontally, naturally, physically understood—it is your upbringing, your education, your brain chemistry, your diet, or whatever. It certainly is not something spiritual.
- B. But the world of the Bible, and hence the world as it truly is, is unapologetically supernatural and spiritual. The Scriptures thrust us into the spiritual realities that stand behind the physical realities which so often consume our attention.
 - 1. When a husband and wife are turned away from one another in the bed, steaming with resentment, letting the sun go down on their anger, the Bible says they are giving “[opportunity to the devil](#)” (Eph 4:27).
 - 2. When a young pastor becomes puffed up with conceit, exalting himself above his flock, the Bible says he’s “[fall\[ing\] into the condemnation of the devil](#)” (1 Tim 3:6).

3. When a gunman mows 100 people to the ground in Orlando, killing 49 of them, the Bible says the Devil is behind it. For “he was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44).
 4. When trial, tribulation, persecution come upon you, the Bible says it is Satan who is often standing by demanding to “sift you like wheat” (Luk 22:31).
 5. When the gospel is faithfully proclaimed in the pulpits and on the street-corners of our city and people couldn’t care less, the Bible says “[It is] the devil [who] comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved” (Luk 8:12).
- C. And, of course, to put a capstone on this point, we must go to Eph 6:11-12: “¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”
1. “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood” but against “the devil” and his demonic host. Paul goes out of his way to say: “You think the problem is in the flesh, in the physical, in the realm that you can see and touch. But the real war is raging behind all of that. It’s spiritual.”
- D. Paul looks at this situation and he concludes in Eph 6:18-19: “We need to ‘pray...at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.’ We need to ‘keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.’” And he ends by saying, “Please pray ‘also for me.’”
1. This is war, the kind at which guns and bombs can’t get. And it’s going on in this room right now!
- E. Now this is why I begin my preaching with prayer.
1. Rational arguments won’t carry the day in a world where Satan is “blind[ing] the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor 4:4). The Spirit of Christ has to overcome the Devil’s influence on this congregation or we’re dead—no matter how theologically accurate or linguistically polished my sermon is.

Jesus and the Devil

- A. Jesus has come to face this reality behind all realities—this war behind all wars. “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” (1 Joh 3:8b).
- B. This becomes particularly obvious in our text back in Luke. We will be here for at least a couple of weeks. This morning we will really only introduce the matter and get through the first two vv.
1. I will organize my thoughts under three headings: (1) A High Calling; (2) A Heart Testing; and (3) A Holy Church.

(1) A High Calling

Thirty Years and Three Offices

- A. Before we move into our text proper for this morning, allow me to reconnect us with what's come before in Luke's narrative, by making note of something I've passed over up to this point.
 - 1. There's this little detail Luke gives right before he dives into the genealogy of Jesus. You see it back up in v. 23: "Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age..."
 - a. Now, my question is: Why would Luke draw our attention to the approximate age of Jesus? What significance, if any, does the age of thirty have in Israel?
- B. A close analysis of the OT brings to light some surprising connections.
 - 1. Thirty was probably the age at which the prophet Ezekiel was called in to ministry (Ezek 1:1); thirty was the age at which a male priest could begin his service at the temple (Num 4:3); thirty was the age at which David began to reign as king over all Israel (2 Sam 5:4).
 - a. In other words, the age of thirty connects Jesus to the three most significant offices within Israel: Prophet, Priest, and King.
- C. Interestingly, these are the three offices in Israel where an individual's installation was often accompanied by the anointing of oil. Men were anointed into these offices.
 - 1. Well, interestingly enough, the baptism of Christ, which immediately precedes Luke's mention of His age, is later referred to as Jesus' anointing: "³⁷ You yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:37-38a).
- D. Jesus, about thirty years of age, is anointed at His baptism by the Spirit into the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King.
 - 1. Quoting from the little booklet I gave away to some of the dad's last Sunday: "Jesus is called the Christ because Christ means 'anointed,' and He was ordained by God and anointed by the Spirit [at His baptism] for His work as our prophet, priest, and king...Jesus is our mediator. He is our prophet to teach us; our priest to sacrifice, intercede, and bless us; and our king to rule and guide us" (Beeke, pp. 2-3).
- E. And His very first act as this threefold office holder will be to stand for His people by standing against the enemy of their souls: namely, the devil.

1. This is amazing, but I'll just mention it in passing as we get ready to dive into our text: The three temptations Luke records for us here actually correspond quite profoundly with the three offices Christ has come to fulfill.
 - a. First a wilderness temptation, where Jesus will prove Himself to be a Prophet greater than Moses.
 - b. Second, a mountain temptation (upon which Satan shows him "all the kingdoms of the world" (v. 5), where Jesus will prove Himself to be a King greater than David.
 - c. Third, a temple temptation, where Jesus will prove Himself to be "a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 5:6).

- F. The true and everlasting Prophet, Priest, and King has arrived at the end of the ages to enter into cosmic combat with the devil himself, for our sake!

(2) A Heart Testing (vv. 1-2)

Conceived, Anointed, Filled...and Led

- A. Jesus has to this point been conceived and anointed by the Holy Spirit. But as we move into the first vv. of our text, we see that He is now also filled by the Holy Spirit: "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit..." (v. 1).
 1. What a wonderful start to the Messiah's life and ministry! One would think it will only be up for Him from here. But what we read next starts to shake at our optimism. For this Jesus who has been conceived, anointed, and filled by the Holy Spirit, is now "Led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil" (vv. 1b-2a).
 - a. What's interesting is that we don't get any sense of reluctance from the Father, Son, or Spirit to do such a thing. We actually sense a sort of urgency.
 - i. Mark's gospel puts it this way: "The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness" (Mark 1:12).

- B. Jesus is being thrust into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to face the Devil. Why?
 1. The answer to this question is fundamentally related to the observations we made last week concerning Jesus' genealogy. Luke traces Jesus' genealogy through David and Abraham all the way back to Adam to accent the fact that Jesus is God's answer to all that went wrong with Adam.

- C. And how did things go wrong with Adam? Failed Satanic temptation. The Devil came in, and Adam, the son of God, bowed. And we've been bowing ever since!

1. Therefore, it is only a natural transition to trace Jesus back to Adam, and then thrust Him into the very combat field where Adam and all of humanity fell so long ago.
 - a. Jesus, if He is to save us, must both do what Adam failed to do, and undo what Adam did. Therefore: “[He] was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil” (vv. 1b-2a).

40 Days

- A. We go on to read in v. 2 that “He ate nothing during those [forty] days.” There are two levels of connection here to the OT. Both are significant.

(1) Moses & Elijah

- A. On one level the forty day fast here is probably meant to set Jesus in connection with two who partook of the same type of forty day wilderness fast before Him: namely, Moses and Elijah. Both of these examples involved Mt. Sinai, the law, and prophetic intercession for God’s people.
 1. This forty day fast, then, puts Jesus in the place of intercession.
- B. Consider an example from Moses. Moses is up on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments, and the people of Israel are down below bowing to golden calf. Moses recalls what he did in response to this: “¹⁸ I lay prostrate before the Lord as before, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all the sin that you had committed, in doing what was evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke him to anger.^{19a} For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure that the Lord bore against you, so that he was ready to destroy you...
²⁶ And I prayed to the Lord, ‘O Lord God, do not destroy your people and your heritage, whom you have redeemed through your greatness, whom you have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.²⁷ Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Do not regard the stubbornness of this people, or their wickedness or their sin,²⁸ lest the land from which you brought us say, “Because the Lord was not able to bring them into the land that he promised them, and because he hated them, he has brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness.”²⁹ For they are your people and your heritage, whom you brought out by your great power and by your outstretched arm” (Deut 9:18-19a, 26–29).
 1. Moses puts himself in the place of death, laying prostrate without food or water, for the sake of his people.
 - a. You better believe, Jesus is doing something like this here in the wilderness for us! The Messiah, Prophet, Priest, King has been brought out into the wilderness to fast, pray, and begin His intercessory work on behalf of His people.

(2) Israel

- A. But on another level, the forty days in the wilderness are meant to align with Israel's forty years in the wilderness. We remember that it was because of Israel's faithlessness in the wilderness that God cursed them to wander for forty years while the original generation died out.
 - 1. As with Adam, they were tested and they failed.

- B. And now here Jesus is brought out into the wilderness for forty days.
 - 1. It seems He is going in reverse. Israel went from the wilderness through the Jordan into the Promised Land. Jesus is moving from the Land through the Jordan out into the wilderness. He's going backwards! He's going the wrong way! Why?
 - a. As with Adam, so now with Israel—He will intercede for His people by standing where they fell. He's going to right all that went wrong. Jesus, if He is to save us, must both do what Israel failed to do, and undo what Israel did.

- C. This observation is clearly confirmed when we look at the way Jesus chooses to fight the Devil.
 - 1. Three Scripture quotations, all from one OT book: Deuteronomy. The book that contains the words delivered to Israel as they stood on the wilderness side of the Jordan river about to cross and enter the Land.
 - a. Jesus saying here: "I am true Israel. I am the faithful Son who will not turn on my Father for momentary pleasure. I have come to mediate that blessing to the world which Israel as a nation never did. I will lead you into the Promised Land of God's presence!"

He Was Hungry

- A. In the last part of v. 2 we read that when the forty days of fasting "were ended, he was hungry." Here is one of the biggest understatements in all the Bible! Forty days without food puts you on the doorstep of death.

- B. But this hunger is deeply significant. We must not be surprised at this point that the leading Satanic temptation involves hunger and food. For such was also the case for both Adam and Israel. They both initially faced trial by food.
 - 1. With Adam, it was the fruit from the forbidden tree. It looked "good for food" (Gen 3:6).
 - 2. With Israel, they were freed from slavery in Egypt by the blood sacrifice of the Passover Lamb, and are brought through the Red Sea on dry ground and into the wilderness of testing.

- a. In [Exo 15](#) they are singing on the banks of the Red Sea, praising God for His great redemption, but by [ch. 16](#) the people are in all out rebellion, over what? Food: “²The whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness,³ and the people of Israel said to them, ‘Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger’” ([vv. 2–3](#)).
- C. Hence, it is with food and hunger in the wilderness that the Messiah must first be tested: “The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread” ([v. 3](#)).
- 1. We will look much more at Christ’s response next time, but for now all we need to see is that the Messiah looks the Devil in the eyes and says with cataclysmic effect: “No!”
 - a. For with this, Jesus becomes the first man to ever truly tell the Devil “No!” The thousands upon thousands of years of “Yes” since Adam, are at last being pushed back against.
- D. And He will hold His “No!” firm unto the end.
- 1. The “[opportune time](#)” of [v. 13](#) is none other than the time of His crucifixion. But even there, as He hangs nailed to the cross, His answer to the devil’s advances is still a resolute: “No!”
 - a. He is the true and everlasting Prophet, Priest, and King—our Mediator who has come to bring us back to God!

(3) A Holy Church

Our Savior and Example

- A. Satan is still hounding us. And I know there are things in our lives right now that we are struggling to say “No!” to—things we know God hates, but things our flesh so loves.
- 1. We might see Jesus here in our text and find it all so inspirational. Many would read these verses as if reading a manual for spiritual warfare. Jesus is our Example. Do what He does here and it will go well with you.
 - a. While this is true, in one sense, if this is where we go at first, we’ve missed the very point of it all. Jesus is doing what no man ever could—not Adam, not Israel, not anyone under heaven!
- B. Before Jesus is our Example He must be our Savior. Before we can follow after Him we must fall before Him. “I can’t do this!”

1. Only one Man was ever able to get in the face of Satan and tell him “No!”
 - a. And it is only when we are brought into Him and He into us, that our allegiance is broken with the Devil and we find ourselves able to do the same.
- C. Returning to a few of those examples of spiritual warfare I gave at the beginning:
 1. When you’re in bed and everything in you wants to turn from your spouse in anger and just let the sun go down, because of Christ in you, you will be able to look the devil firm in the eye and say, “No!” And you turn towards her and grab her hand, and you apologize for your part in the conflict. And you send the devil screaming!
 2. When Satan comes to sift you like wheat, and you find yourself up to your neck in suffering and trial. Because of Christ in you, you will still be able to look the devil firm in the eye and say, “No! I will not grumble against my Lord. *‘For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain’ (Phil 1:21).*”
- D. The devil has lost his hold on us! Whatever it is for you, in Christ you are no longer a slave. In Christ you can say “No!” Will you struggle and stumble in the flesh? Yes. But will you fail and fall in the end? No!
 1. *“Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).*