

Just Say No (Part 2)

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.’” (Luke 4:1–4)

Just Say No

- A. I’m titling my messages through [Luke 4:1-13](#) “Just Say No” for 2 reasons:
- B. For one thing, Jesus is the first Man in the history of the world to look the Devil in the eye and push back with a resolute “No!” As I said last time: Thousands of years of “Yes” after “Yes” after “Yes” become at last in the Savior a resounding and cataclysmic “No!”
 - 1. We are witnessing in these vv. the first mortal wound ever delivered to the serpent of old.
- C. But, secondly, we must remember that Jesus has taken on flesh for us.
 - 1. Consequently, while in one sense His “No!” is a slamming of the gates on the evil one, in another sense it is also a throwing open of the gates for His people. He opens to humanity a new world of possibility.
 - a. Where, since the fall, we have always and only been children of the Devil by nature, now in Jesus we have the glorious possibility of becoming children of God.
- D. Those who have been brought into Jesus, participate in His “No!” in their stand against the Devil. His “No!” makes our “No!” possible and even, ultimately, certain.
 - 1. As Paul tells the church in Rome: “[The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet](#)” ([Rom 16:20](#)). The Son first put the serpent under His heel, and now by His Spirit, His church is keeping the serpent there, until the end!
- E. We’re just going to get through the first temptation this morning—the Wilderness Temptation ([vv. 3-4](#)). I’m going to first make (1) 2 Opening Observations ([vv. 1-2](#)), and then we’ll look at (2) The Satanic Temptation ([v. 3](#)); and (3) The Messianic Resistance ([v. 4](#)).

(1) 2 Opening Observations (vv. 1-2)

(1) “Being Tempted”

- A. The first observation I want to make keys off of the phrase there at the beginning of v. 2: “being tempted” — “Jesus...was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil.”
1. The tense of the verb in Greek translated appropriately here indicates the ongoing nature of these temptations.
 - a. Therefore, we are forced to conclude that, while the account we just read may be the climax of Satan’s temptations in the wilderness, it is certainly not the beginning of them! Jesus’ whole wilderness experience was one of being tempted. From day 1 through day 40. We’re just witnessing the grand finale.
 - B. This speaks eloquently to us of the perpetuity and ubiquity of temptation. In one sense it never stops, it’s ongoing, it’s everywhere. All of life in this fallen wilderness world is temptation.
 1. Temptation may differ in degree but it is always present. Just because the lion the doesn’t always strike with recognizable ferocity doesn’t mean he isn’t always prowling in the shadows, baiting and waiting.
 - a. He is there when you are sitting at your computer, when you are flipping channels on your television, when your shopping for groceries at the corner store, when that guy starts flirting with you at the office. “Being tempted by the devil.”
 - C. Therefore, as Peter says, we must: “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Pet 5:8).

(2) Fasting as both Weakness and Strength

- A. And this leads me to my next observation. One of the ways we stay “sober-minded” and “watchful” is to do precisely what Jesus does here: namely, fast—“And he ate nothing during those days” (v. 2).
1. This is interesting, because, while in one sense fasting makes Jesus most vulnerable to this first temptation, in another sense it makes Him most ready to resist it!
- B. We must never think that because Jesus was fasting in this way He was merely empty. O no! For even in our text we read that He was “full of the Holy Spirit” (v. 1). Isn’t this a profound thought?! There is a way to be full even when you are empty of the things of the world.

1. It is a reminder to us that fasting from the things of this world is truly feasting on God. As Jesus would later say to His disciples: *“I have food to eat that you do not know about”* (John 4:32).
- C. There is a sort of weak-strength that marks a fasting man. Do you know what I mean? A large part of why we fail when the heat of temptation is turned up is we are so used to saying *“Yes!”*
1. We come out of the womb spring-loaded to say *“Yes!”* to everything we desire. I want food—*“Yes!”* I want TV—*“Yes!”* I want wine—*“Yes!”*
 - a. We get so used to saying *“Yes!”* to our desires that we aren’t ready to say *“No!”* when the Devil’s at our door. I want sex before marriage—*“Yes!”* I want that job even though I have to lie to get it—*“Yes!”* I want revenge on that person who just humiliated me in front of my peers—*“Yes!”*
- D. Fasting (from food, TV, video games, etc.) helps us keep our desires, our appetites in check, in submission to the One who ultimately satisfies, God. It trains us in the day of relative peace to say *“No!”* in the day of absolute war!
1. We talk about training for sports, marathons, hikes, recitals, jobs, military. But what about training for the cosmic warfare that is raging against our souls in this room right now?!
 - a. If the Apostle Paul thinks he needs training, how much more do we? *“I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified”* (1 Cor 9:27).
- E. So Jesus isn’t merely weak in the flesh here. He is simultaneously strong in the Spirit!

(2) The Satanic Temptation (v. 3)

The Subtlety of the Devil

- A. We proceed from these opening observations into now this first Satanic Temptation: *“The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread”* (v. 3).
1. This statement seems relatively harmless on the surface of it, but that’s the horror of the Devil’s methods. You don’t even realize the hook’s going through your lip until it’s too late. *“If you’re the son of God, if You’re hungry, get some food for yourself?”* Is that it? That’s the temptation? It doesn’t seem like a big deal to me. Let Jesus get some food.
 - a. But if Christ were to turn that stone to bread in this moment He would in effect be breaking the bond between Himself and His Father and handing the world over to the Devil! This bread would be the undoing of the cosmos!

- i. Beneath the seemingly harmless surface of Satan’s statement here there is a bottomless ocean of ill-will!
- B. There’s a serpentine subtlety to it all. And the Messiah is onto it. He watched it happen with Adam and Israel before Him. He will not let it happen to Him!
 - 1. There is a lot that could be said here about the nature of Satanic temptation, but I will highlight for us only 3 things. These will come into clearer and clearer light as we continue through the other 2 temptations next week.

(1) Defamation of Character

- A. The first thing to note is that satanic temptation involves Defamation of Character. And I’m not thinking about my or your character right now. I’m thinking about God’s.
 - 1. Before Satan aims his words anywhere else, he aims them at the glory, at the character of God.
- B. I wonder if you noticed. There has been narrative silence in Luke since 3:22. The last voice we heard was the voice of God spoken over Jesus at His baptism: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”
 - 1. Then, the very next voice we hear comes again to Jesus, though not from His Father, but from His enemy. And the enemy’s voice is issued as a challenge of the Father’s: “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread” (v. 3).
 - a. Does this not just immediately bring to mind how Satan approached Adam in the garden? “Did God really say?” (Gen 3:1). “Let’s question God’s word for a moment. Let’s question His character.”
 - i. “If your Father loves You so much, why did He bring You into the wilderness to starve? He gave Adam every tree in the garden but one. He gave Israel manna in the wilderness. Where are your trees? Where’s your manna? Would a good and loving God really let this kind of stuff happen to You? Face it. He’s a liar.”
- C. I wonder if you’ve ever noticed the subtleties of this satanic voice blending with the thoughts of your own consciousness—as you look out at the often hard circumstances of your life and you find yourself thinking: “Where’s the goodness and love of God for me in this?”
 - 1. There’s a snake coiled under those words. And you better put them under your heel before they poison your heart!

(2) Identity Crisis

- A. Satanic temptation comes at as at another level, involving what I would call an Identity Crisis.
 - 1. As Satan aims to get us questioning who God is, he is also aiming to get us questioning who God has said we are.

- B. The Father had already spoken identity over the Son: “You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased” (3:22).
 - 1. I don’t know if you’ve always interpreted this as a word for those standing around Jesus, but we actually have no indication that anyone else (except maybe John) heard it. Make no mistake about it: This word came primarily, if not entirely, for the Son Himself.
 - a. That’s why Luke records God speaking in the 2nd person: “You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.” That’s why Matthew, recording the scene writes: “the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending” (Mat 3:16).

- C. Jesus needed this vision, this voice from His Father. Why? He’s been the Son from all eternity. Why would he need affirmation of His identity now?
 - 1. Because now, God is sending Him to the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. “Don’t forget who You are to Me, Son. Because Satan will attack your identity at it’s very core”—“If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread” (v. 3).
 - a. “I’m not sure You’re loved. I’m not sure He’s well pleased with You. I’m not sure You’re a Son. If what He says about You is true...prove it!”

- D. He’s calling the Son to question His identity, to question the validity of His Father’s word over Him. He’s calling Jesus into the horror of self-justification.
 - 1. In this case, the act of proving His sonship would be the very denial of His Sonship. For it is the nature of a Son to trust, obey, and submit to His Father. The Son shouldn’t need justification in anyone else’s eyes but His. For the Son to come out from under the Father to justify Himself to another would be to forfeit His place as Son.

- E. Don’t we just live there sometimes? Identity crisis? We who have been baptized in Jesus have the very same banner over our heads: “You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.”
 - 1. And yet, we doubt our Father’s word at this point. We doubt the sufficiency of Christ’s work at this point. And we spend so much of our energy trying to prove ourselves, and justify ourselves, and forge an identity for ourselves, and get people to love us and be well pleased with us.

- a. All the while we already have the love and pleasure of the One who matters most, if only we would take Him at His Word!

(3) Tyranny of the Urgent

- A. Satanic temptation comes at us at yet another level, involving what I would refer to as the Tyranny of the Urgent.
 - 1. If Satan can get us to question God's character and bring our own identity as His children into crisis, then he will easily get us to bow to the tyranny of the urgent.
 - a. For if God has abandoned me, if there is no hope of a future glory, why endure trial? If God is not going to take care of me, then I might as well take care of myself...starting right now.
 - i. "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread" (v. 3). "Why starve. This is stupid. Satisfy yourself!"
- B. Satan counterfeits what God promises to give us eventually and offers it immediately. God will protect and provide for His children. But it is through the valley of the shadow—"through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).
 - 1. As I've spent these last view weeks meditating on the designs of the devil, it became clear to me that one of his chief strategies is to give me my best life now.
 - a. "Forego the valley of the shadow, I'll give you the green pastures now. Forego the tribulations, I'll give you the kingdom now. Let me give you everything you want today, so that you don't even realize you're not ready for tomorrow"—when Christ descends with a trumpet blast, and the last hour is upon us.

Will the Son Be the Servant?

- A. The big question at every point is whether son will use prerogative and position for his own gain over and against His Father or under and with his Father. Will He exalt Himself and rebel, or will He humble Himself and obey?
 - 1. As one commentator puts it: "The test of Jesus as the Son of God is thus a test of whether he will be the Servant of God" (Pillar). Will the Son be the Servant? That is the question. And the answer? Yes!

(3) The Messianic Resistance (v. 4)

- A. As we keep reading in our text, we soon realize that the Son is not going buy what the devil is selling: "And Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone"' (v. 4).

- B. He throws back in the devil's face a text from Deut 8. Before I make any comment here, let's read it in context: "²You shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.³ And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (vv. 2–3).
1. It seems fitting that to fight a temptation regarding food after 40 days in the wilderness, Jesus would quote a text from Israel's history concerning food during their 40 years in the wilderness!
- C. Manna, you might recall was God's mysterious way of sustaining Israel as they wandered through the wilderness, eventually towards the Promised Land. When the people were grumbling in the wilderness in their hunger, God, in His grace, rained bread down from heaven.
1. He was hoping to teach them something here. He had a particular purpose in mind: namely, "that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (v. 3b).
 - a. "You don't ultimately need food, you need Me. If you leave Me for food, you will end up with nothing. If you leave food for Me, I will make sure you have all that you need in the end."
 - i. That's the lesson God is trying to teach Israel with manna. That's the lesson Israel never learned.
- D. What a tragic story. Nearly 40 years later, when nearly all the first faithless generation had died out for their sin, the second generation proves to be no better: "The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food" (Num 21:5).
1. "Worthless food"?! Psa 78:25 calls manna "the bread of the angels." But Israel would rather have meat pots in Egypt. What more can be said about the depravity of man?!
- E. So here Christ, at the end of 40 days of fasting in the wilderness, throws Deut 8:3 in the devil's face, as if to say: "What Israel failed to learn, this Son knows by heart: 'Man doesn't live by bread alone.' God is faithful. I am His beloved Son. And though I am hungry now, He will always provide for Me in the end!"

The Subtlety of the Savior

- A. The devil is such a snake that there are subtleties under his subtleties.

1. In all of this talk of bread He's been aiming for Defamation of Character, Identity Crisis, and the Tyranny of the Urgent.
 2. O but there is something even more fundamental running underneath all of this. He is aiming in these temptations here at the outset of Jesus' ministry to set the Son on a trajectory that would have Him rejecting His Father's will when the shadow of the cross falls over Him later. Satan is trying to sow doubt into Jesus' heart now in hope that it just might flower into full on denial of the cross later.
 - a. He knows why Jesus has come, and he knows it's over for him if the Son goes through with it.
- B. And here's what's amazing. Jesus sees right through him on this point. And He matches Satan's subtleties with subtleties of His own.
1. For hidden in plain sight in the manna narrative of the OT, is the gospel of a God who would come down in grace for a grumbling people and give Himself away to save and sustain and carry them into the Land of Promise.
 - a. The cross is all over this narrative. And if we have any doubt, Jesus will later spell it out for us in capital letters: "⁴⁷ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.⁴⁸ I am the bread of life.⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh" (John 6:47–51).
 - i. Now it starts to become clear. There were no fruit trees in a garden for this Son. There was no manna from heaven in the wilderness for this Son. Because He Himself is the tree of life, the manna from heaven! He has come to give Himself over to death for the life of the world!
- C. What a glorious Savior! When the devil would try to subtly point Him away from the cross, He subtly points the devil right back to the cross. His love is for us is unswerving!
1. And yet so many still look at this Bread that's come down to us from heaven and say "Yuck, worthless food."
 2. But not so for us. We are those who come and feast on the Son in the wilderness of our temptations. And because of His "No!", we find ourselves able to say the same.