

St. Matthew AME Church  
Lent Bible Study  
Wednesday, February 24, 2010

St. Matthew 4:1-11

- I. Jesus led into the wilderness by the spirit to be tempted by the devil
  - A. Nature of the temptation- initiative led by God (the spirit)
    1. In English the words tempt has come to mean almost without exception “tempt to do evil”. But the word for tempt in Hebrew and Greek means to “to test or prove.” It could include a tempting to do evil but it often means to test or prove the value or good quality of a person or thing.
      - a. Test gold by submersing it in acid. If the gold is pure, nothing happens, if it is not the impurity is burned off.
      - b. This is how Abraham was tested by God when he was called to sacrifice Isaac and Jacob when he was tested by the things that happened to him.
  - B. This is also how Jesus is tested in the wilderness by Satan. The test was designed to show that Jesus was really God’s Son and that He would follow the path that God laid out for Him.
    1. Notice the test comes after His baptism and God declares “this is my beloved Son...” Test proves that God really is
  - C. Likewise some test come to us, led by the Spirit or from God to see if we are genuine. If we will follow the path that God has laid out for us.
    1. Many of us want to go on the journey without a test. Cross is the test. We want the crown without the cross.
- II. For the Devil (Satan), God’s and our arch enemy the temptation was for evil. It was an opportunity to get Jesus to question God’s word, distort God’s promises in Scripture and try to block God’s plan for man’s salvation by keeping Jesus from the cross.
  - A. It is important for us to understand that Satan initially sought to keep Jesus from the cross. The means by which he would do this was to undermine the relationship between God and Jesus, Father and Son.
  - B. This would be done by tempting Jesus and this temptation would be by trying to gain control of Jesus mind.
    1. As it is with us the battle is for our mind.
    2. Reason this is important is because if Satan can get our minds he will get our actions. Actions are revealers of thoughts.
- III. Nature of temptations. Come after Jesus has been fasting and is hungry. Temptations have a specific purpose. We are not tempted just for temptations sake. Satan has a strategy behind his temptation of Jesus and us.
  - A. Undermine our relationship with God – “if you are the Son of God” (verse 3)
    1. After the baptism God has declared “this is my beloved Son”- trick of the enemy because he knew that Jesus knew who He was, real goal was to get Jesus to abuse His status by misusing His divine power.
    2. When we are tempted it is an effort to get us to abuse who we are, we are the sons and daughters of God- get us to turn on our heavenly Father- force God to turn on us for being disobedient (sinful)

3. This is why Satan wants us to sin- especially after what Jesus has done for us-can you imagine what it does to God after all He has done for us, sacrificed His Son and we still sin
  4. Gives Satan victory over God, even after Jesus we continue to sin
- B. Get us to question God's word – doubt – “command these stones to be made bread”
1. Play on how he tempted Eve in Garden of Eden- “has God said” -“it is written man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”
  2. Trick- prove you are God's Son by doing a miracle and making these stones become bread. Satan knows Jesus can do it, but he also wants Jesus to disobey God's Word driving a wedge between Father and Son.
  3. Then Jesus is no longer obedient and not an example to us- impressed us but disappointed God
- IV. Questions God's goodness – Jesus is hungry and exhausted- plays on His physical condition
- A. If you are the Son of God and He loves you, how could He let you be in this condition?
    1. This is what he does to us –mind games- if we are God's children how could he let us be in this condition or go through this
  - B. Jesus is simply meeting His need-rationalization
  - C. Trick- get us to take matters into our own hands- doubt God and not depend on Him
  - D. If Satan succeeded he could have:
    1. Eliminated Jesus dependence on the Father- tries to convince us we don't need to depend on God
    2. Get Jesus to ignore God's Word- tries to get us to ignore God's Word, it is not important
    3. Get Jesus not to go to the cross- tries to get us not to bear our cross (will)
- V. Bottom line, like Jesus we must prove that we are able to pass the test.