

Tempted by the Devil

Matthew 4:1-11

INTRODUCTION

- A. Robert Browning's famous poem, the Pied Piper of Hamelin, was based on a story centuries old.
1. Hamelin, a little German town in the duchy of Brunswick, was overrun with rats.
 - a. Every home was filled with rats, as were the shops and streets.
 - b. According to Browning, "They fought the dogs, and killed the cats, / And bit the babies in the cradles, / And ate the cheeses out of the vats, / And licked the soup from the cook's own ladles."
 2. An odd-looking stranger entered town, promising to rid the town of rats for the sum of one hundred guilders.
 - a. He was quickly hired, and, pulling a small flute from his pocket, he began to play a shrill tune. As he played, the rats came tumbling out of the houses and shops.
 - b. As the piper played, he marched toward the river and the rats followed him in an ever-increasing mass until they were all led into the River Weser and drowned.
 3. But the mayor refused to keep his end of the bargain, not wanting to pay the guilders.
 4. Without a word, the piper left the mayor's office, took out his flute, and began playing a different song.
 - a. This time, the sound wasn't shrill, but sweet and low and dreamy.
 - b. Instantly, the children of Hamelin came tumbling out of the houses and shops and schools, and, to the horror of the onlookers, they followed the piper to a mountain which opened up as though it were a door and all the children - one hundred and thirty of them - trooped inside and were never seen again.
 5. All but one little boy who was lame on one foot.
 - a. Unable to keep up, he escaped the fate of the others and later told them what he heard.
 - b. The piper's tune, he said, was about a land where all things were beautiful, the people were good, the rivers were clear, the flowers were brighter, and the sky was brilliant. In this land, dogs ran faster, bees didn't sting, horses flew with eagle's wings, and no one was ever sick.
 6. Its lure was virtually irresistible, and with this sweet, subtle, soft delusion the piper led the crowd toward their doom.
- B. Such is a wonderful illustration of how Satan tempts us to sin.
1. He can take what we know to be the most sinful activity and make it so appealing that we can barely resist.
 2. How many of us have done what we knew was wrong, but Satan came, made it so appealing, and we were convinced that we just had to do whatever.
- C. Satan met his match, however, when he went and tempted Jesus.
1. There's something of a mystery in Jesus' temptations.
 - a. God cannot be tempted by evil (Js. 1:13), but here we see God in the flesh being tempted by sin.
 - b. Yet, we know that when Jesus was incarnate, "he made himself nothing" (Phil. 2:7). Surely, in making himself nothing, Jesus gave up some divine prerogatives, one of which was certainly the right not to be tempted.
 2. In this lesson, we want to see what we can learn from Jesus' temptations.

TEMPTATION IS GOING TO COME, v. 1

- A. After his baptism, Jesus went into the wilderness to be tempted.
1. The gospels make the point that just after Jesus' baptism, he went into the wildness to be tempted.
 - a. "At once the Spirit sent him out into the deserts (Mk. 1:12).
 - b. Jesus had just experienced a high point in his life when Satan's attacks came.
 - 1) We, too, can have high points in our lives when Satan attacks.
 - 2) We can believe that we are doing so well in our Christian walls, and then Satan comes to tempt us.
 2. Notice that the Spirit led Jesus to be tempted; it was part of God's plan for Jesus to face temptation.
 - a. That Jesus faced temptation allows him to be a sympathetic High Priest.

- 1) "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Heb. 2: 18).
 - 2) "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin" (Heb. 4:15).
 - 3) Jesus understands what it's like to be tempted; he knows what it's like to struggle against Satan; he's been tempted every way just as you and I are, and he's able to sympathize with us.
- b. Jesus had to be tempted to defeat Satan.
- 1) Satan had always tempted individuals and he won.
 - a) "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3 :23).
 - b) You and I have struggled against Satan, and we have fallen.
 - 2) Yet, in Jesus Satan finds a formidable opponent, Jesus did not give in to temptation thus defeated Satan.
- B. We should expect Satan to tempt us.
1. If he tempted the very Son of God, we can rest assured that he will tempt us, also.
 2. "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).
 3. Because we know temptations are going to come, let us prepare ourselves for them.
 - a. Trochilus, one of the disciples of Plato, miraculously escaped from a storm at sea in which the ship was sunk and he himself almost perished.
 - 1) When he reached home, the first thing he did was to order his servants to wall up two windows in one of his chambers which looked out upon the sea.
 - 2) His fear was that on some fine, bright day, looking out upon the sea when it was calm and tranquil and flashing in the sunlight, he should again be tempted to venture upon its treacherous waters.
 - b. Trochilus, because he knew he might be tempted by the sea, took preparation against the temptation. What temptations are you bound to endure in your life? How have you prepared yourself to deal with those temptations?

TEMPTATION SHOULD CAUSE US TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD, v. 2

- A. John Quincy Adams, the sixth President of the United States, once said, "Every temptation is an opportunity of our getting nearer to God." Jesus drew near to God prior to his temptation.
- B. Jesus fasted for forty days in the desert.
1. Fasting is one way that we can draw close to God.
 2. Fasting is not simply going without food; fasting is going without food in order to spend that time in prayer and meditation.
- C. We should consider making fasting a regular part of our lives.
1. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave his disciples instructions on fasting (Mt. 6:16-18). Had God not intended for his children to fast during the Christian age, why did Jesus teach his disciples how to fast?
 2. Jesus said that after his ascension, the church would fast (Mt. 9:14-15).
 3. After Jesus' ascension, the church did fast.
 - a. As the church in Antioch fasted, the Holy Spirit told the church to send Barnabas and Saul on a missionary journey (Acts 13:2-3).
 - b. When Paul and Barnabas appointed elders "in every church," they did so with prayer and fasting (Acts 14:23).
- D. One reason Jesus overcame these temptations seems to be that he had spent time alone with God.
1. "Come near to God and he will come near to you" (Js. 4:8).
 2. Are you spending time alone with God? Are you coming near to him?

TEMPTATION COMES TO OUR WEAKNESSES, v. 3-10

- A. Satan does not tempt us where we are strong; he tempts us where we are weak.
1. Satan tempted Jesus according to the Lord's weaknesses.
 - a. After Jesus had fasted for forty days, Satan tempted him to turn stones into bread.
 - 1) The desert was littered with pieces of limestone which look exactly like little loaves.
 - 2) No doubt but that at the end of the 40 days of fasting, Jesus was hungry; Satan tempted Jesus

where he was weak.

- 3) The temptation was for Jesus to use his supernatural power for himself.
 - b. Then Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and tempted Jesus to throw himself off and allow the angels to catch him.
 - 1) No doubt there was a large group of people at the temple.
 - a) If Jesus threw himself off and the angels caught him, he would have been revered by the people.
 - b) Jesus wanted to be revered; he wanted the people to understand that he was the Son of God.
 - i. Being caught by the angels would prove that Jesus was the Son of God.
 - ii. Jesus could then be understood to be the Son of God without dying for man.
 - 2) The temptation was to put God to the test, to force God to use his power.
 - c. Then Satan took Jesus to a high mountain and showed him the glory of the kingdoms of the world. If Jesus would worship Satan, the devil would give him the kingdoms of the world.
 - 1) The temptation was for Jesus to avoid the cross, and gain the glory of this world.
 - 2) Jesus could have gained honor and prestige without going to the cross.
2. Even though Jesus was genuinely tempted, he overcame the temptations, he did not give in to the adversary.
- B. Satan tempts us at our weak spots, too.
1. Esau sold his birthright to Jacob (Gen. 25:29-34).
 - a. Jacob was cooking a stew, and Esau came in weary from the field.
 - b. Because Esau was hungry and wanted stew, he sold his birthright to Jacob.
 2. Achan took from Jericho a Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, because he coveted them (Josh. 7:21).
 3. Esau and Achan fell because they were enticed by their weaknesses.
 - a. One is tempted “when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed” (Js. 1:14).
 - 1) Our desires are our weaknesses.
 - 2) Satan knows our weaknesses and he tempts us there.
 - b. We must stand against these temptations.
 - 1) In order to stand fast against temptation, we need a clear understanding of what our weaknesses are.
 - 2) We don’t necessarily need to be ashamed of our weaknesses; we all have them, but we do need to recognize those weaknesses and fortify ourselves against them.

TEMPTATION CAN BE OVERCOME WITH SCRIPTURE

- A. Each time Satan came to Jesus with a temptation, Jesus responded by saying, “It is written” and quoting Scripture.
- B. We need to place God’s Word in our hearts so that we can overcome temptation.
 1. “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word” (Ps. 119:9).
 2. “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Ps. 119:11).
 3. Part of the Christian’s armor is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17).
- C. This is one reason why we need to study and memorize Scripture.
 1. We need to know God’s Word so that we can keep Satan away.
 2. Many sins are committed because individuals do not know what God’s Word.
 3. Have you hidden God’s Word in your heart?

TEMPTATION CAN BE OVERCOME

- A. After Jesus refused to succumb to temptation, “the devil left him,” v. 11.
 1. Luke 4:13 reads, “When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.” Luke makes the point that the devil left Jesus for a while, he would be back.
 2. After Satan’s defeat, angels came and ministered to Jesus (v. 11). the angels likely ministered to Jesus with food.
- B. Jesus’ defeat of Satan here gives us a glimpse of Satan’s total defeat.
 1. The devil will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:10).
 2. In Revelation, the saints overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony

(Rev. 12:11).

- C. Because we know Satan will be defeated, we should take heart - temptations can be overcome.
 - 1. God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Cor. 10:13).
 - 2. Take heart - Jesus overcame Satan, and so can you!

CONCLUSION

- A. When Satan saw he could not defeat Jesus, he left him.
- B. When Satan sees that he cannot defeat us he will leave us – “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jas 4:7).
- C. Are you resisting Satan?