

**TESTED AND APPROVED****Luke 4:1-13****(Read Luke 4:1-13)**

**INTRO:** Back in 1985 I was on the first of many diets. I was very successfully losing weight on the Weight Watchers Quick Start Program. Unlike the diets that we have followed at other times that simply count calories or cut out carbs or cut any animal products, or like the most recent iterations of Weight Watchers that assign points to different kinds of food, Kathy and I were carefully preparing meals according to the Weight Watchers recipe book we had purchased. This program employed the counting of exchanges. An exchange was a prescribed serving. There were fruit exchanges, vegetable exchanges, milk exchanges, bread/starch exchanges, fat exchanges and protein exchanges. It was amazing and it worked well. I also exercised like a maniac at least 2 hours a day. After 6 months I had lost almost 90 pounds. We were vigilant and the diet worked.

But for one terrible night in the middle of those six months we thought we had gone off the rails. Whereas no food was particularly forbidden on the plan, we knew which ones we should avoid because of **TEMPTATION!** And we thought we had **TEMPTATION!** under control until the scourge of the Spring-time hit. We came across some sweet little girls selling **GIRL SCOUT COOKIES!** And OHHHHH, how the mighty fell! We each ate a box of cookies! Not just a serving, or two servings, or even a sleeve of which there were two in each box. No, we ate an entire box each.

The self-loathing was so strong I felt like I had committed the unpardonable sin. Well, it turns out, in the years since, that it has been proven that Girl Scout Cookies are indeed an addictive substance as shown by this headline I saw this past week. And notice how the cartel supplying this calorific temptation in a colorful box have moved up the sale of the stuff to the bleak midwinter so as to prey on the cravings of helpless addicts trying to stave off the lack of sunlight and resulting Seasonal Affective Disorder. And then, to top it off, they still use eager little girls and their even more eager mothers (probably the same little girls who sold us those illicit morsels back in 1985, only now grown into desperate dealers with daughters). The temptation is real folks! And I only hope I can withstand it as I am accosted as I walk into Hawkins or the Fin in the coming weeks.

It comes down to this, I'm not as strong as Jesus and Jesus's temptation wasn't a ridiculous recounting of a weak person's lack of willpower. Jesus would have no trouble saying NO to Girl Scout Cookies even if they were Thin Mints. They would be a walk in the park for him because he withstood actual temptation in the Wilderness and from the Tempter himself. Yes, the next thing we come to as we continue growing with Jesus is the temptation Jesus endured for 40 days in the Wilderness. And while this account is about him and his perfect responses to Satan's attempts to get him to fail, we nevertheless have much to learn as we see him tested and approved. One thing we learn here is . . .

**We need the Holy Spirit**

- This seems like a no-brainer but we need to be reminded. The Holy Spirit is one third of the Godhead and yet we overlook him far too often. He's not hocus pocus and he's not a figment of someone's mind – he is our comfort, wisdom, and strength.
- Notice how Jesus went nowhere without him, *Jesus, FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, left the Jordan and was LED BY THE SPIRIT into the wilderness*, Luke 4:1. I'm sure you noticed my emphasis on the PowerPoint. Jesus was **full of the Spirit** and **led by the Spirit**. The entire Trinity was at work here in this Wilderness experience. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit went up together against the devil. If Jesus did that, isn't it mindboggling that we would try to do otherwise? Jesus went fully armed into this spiritual warfare and we can do no less. Jesus was submitted to the Spirit – we need to be too.
- It's simple, when we face the devil in our own strength, we will fail. It's not maybe, and it's not sometimes, we **WILL** fail. We need to face him with the Spirit. This world is increasingly the wilderness. We must be in the Spirit in the wilderness as Jesus was.
- Because . . .

**Satan is a reality**

- He's not an outmoded concept or a childish conjuring or a myth. Here he is assailing Jesus with temptations as big as life and thinking he is otherwise is surrendering to his wiles and plunging deeper into the quicksand of his deception.

- A song on Keith Green's first album is called SATAN'S BOAST and some of the words go like this.

*Oh, my job keeps getting easier  
As time keeps slipping away  
I can imitate your brightest light  
And make your night look just like day  
I put some truth in every lie  
To tickle itching ears  
You know I'm drawing people just like flies  
'Cause they like what they hear  
I'm gaining power by the hour  
They're falling by the score  
You know, it's getting very simple now  
'Cause no one believes in me anymore  
Oh, heaven's just a state of mind  
My books read on your shelf  
And have you heard that God is dead?  
I made that one up myself  
They dabble in magic spells  
They get their fortunes read  
You know they heard the truth  
But turned away and followed me instead  
I used to have to sneak around  
But now they just open their doors  
You know, no one's watching for my tricks  
Because no one believes in me anymore*

- Humanity, and too often, even people who call themselves Christian, are falling into this trap. So, while it seems like a no-brainer, don't trust the devil. Satan is a liar. In John 8 Jesus is having a discussion with the Pharisees about his teachings and their hard hearts and he blasts them with *"If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* John 8:42-44. Bam! They don't understand Jesus's words because they don't know his language. They only know the language of the father of lies whose native language is lies.
- Notice his strategy with Jesus as he attempts to make him fall.
  - The 1<sup>st</sup> temptation is an attack on Jesus's humanity. He's in the midst of a 40-day fast and he knows that Jesus, as a man, is worn down by hunger and thirst. So he tempts Jesus to do what he, as God the Son, had the power to do – turn stones into bread. Jesus replies with scripture – *man cannot live on bread alone.* The point is bread without God is not life at all. And further, he showed us a really good thing to remember, just because you can doesn't mean you should. And besides, the satisfying of the physical is not complete humanity – we need our soul satisfied as well.
  - The 2<sup>nd</sup> temptation is might and power. It was the offer to be front and center and at the top receiving adulation – if only he would worship Satan. Jesus responds with scripture again – *Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.*
  - And the 3<sup>rd</sup> temptation is to test God. It's a sly suggestion to check and see if he really loves as much as he says. He just said you're his son and he's well-pleased – have him put his money where his mouth is. Jump and let his angels catch you – and he twists scripture to do it. A quick aside, that's one of Satan's favorite tricks – twisting scripture to make it work his evil plan. So any time you hear a scripture used in a way or used to justify a position or action that doesn't seem consistent with the rest of God's Word, that's the Holy Spirit telling you to beware of the lie.

- Jesus sets the evil one straight – and uses scripture again – *Do not put the Lord your God to the test.*
- Let me quickly point out some wisdom from G. Campbell Morgan in his teaching on vv. 9-12 as they pertain to testing God. I'll just quote them and let them sink in: He writes: "*The moment we do something to prove God, we are proving that we are not sure of God.*" He is referring to testing God. And that is why he continues with: "*Trust never employs tricks to find out whether the one trusted is trustworthy.*" Faith requires that we take God at his word and that he is completely worthy of trust.

● And, we already know it, but we must never forget . . .

**Satan's temptation is an attempt to divert God's plan**

- This was true for Jesus and it is for us too. Commentator, Donald Miller says "*The temptation was not to make Jesus doubt his mission, it was to divert him from it.*" He will throw obstacles into our path to slow us down and stop us. As it was for Jesus, Satan's plan is to frustrate us to distraction and despair. Truthfully he wants to destroy us and God's plan, but he knows he's beat, so he will make all the mayhem he can. And he's pretty good at it. It's important you remember what he's up to.
- Here are some other things to remember when we find ourselves in the wilderness. By the way, I say "when" because, as his disciples, we will, for sure, have to deal with Satan's attacks – so it's not if, it is definitely when.
  - Temptation in itself is not sin, giving in to it is. Jesus was tempted to get him to sin. He didn't give in, so he never sinned. Temptation will come – and it'll be more Thin Mints applying pressure. In fact, Satan will apply the same three temptations and more. He will tempt us with the physical and with vanity and with doubt – and many more. Stand firm and remember God's word.
  - We say it over and over and maybe you get tired of it, but you need to know what's here in the Word of God. In the Matthew account of Jesus temptation in the wilderness, Jesus responds to the first temptation to change stones into bread with the same scripture as Luke, which by the way is Deuteronomy 8:3, but with more of it, '*Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*'" The Psalmist tells us that God's word is a lamp to our feet and in that same chapter says, *I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.* Psalm 119:11. Hide God's word in your heart and you will have tools against temptation.
  - And finally, I'm not being negative, I'm just speaking the truth when I say just because you've successfully withstood Satan's attack, don't ever think he's done with you. The final words of our text tells us the devil leaves Jesus "*until an opportune time.*" (13b) He certainly exploited every opportunity with Jesus, don't think he will leave you alone – unless, of course you're no threat to him – and then we have to address some issues for you. One place we see that for Jesus is in may have been later in Luke at the Last Supper, where we read, *Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve.* Luke 22:3. But we know he was and continues to lurk and wait for every opportunity. One vivid picture of this is in the movie THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST where the devil is lurking in the background as Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. This we know – Satan is defeated, but he will be making evil mischief until his final demise at the end of time. Until then let's strive, like our Savior to be found, tested and approved. Amen.