

The Devil said to Jesus, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan!” (Matthew 4:9-10a)

Gracious Father, as you led Jesus into the desert by the power of your Holy Spirit, may we draw on that same Spirit in your times of temptation. Help us to put aside those things that tempt and distract us from your mission so that we might focus on sharing the good news of Christ. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Introduction

After Jesus was baptized, the Spirit led him out into the wilderness where he fasted, going without food for 40 days and 40 nights. There the devil came to tempt him to prove he was the Son of God. But Jesus resisted the devil’s power.

Read: Matthew 4:1-11

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The Biblical Context

In Scripture, we hear little of Jesus’ childhood. His public ministry began around the age of 30, when he was baptized by John in the River Jordan. In Jesus’ baptism, the voice of the Father from heaven declared, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

After this, he was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. Not long after, when the devil came and tried to tempt Jesus, he took aim at the Father’s baptismal promise. The devil said, “If you are the Son of God ...” — calling into question whether Jesus really was who God said he was.

The devil has been calling God’s Word into question since the very beginning. In Genesis 3, the serpent asked Eve, “Did God really say ...?” Clearly, the devil knows God’s Word; he just does not trust and believe in it. He does not want us to believe it either.

Discussion Questions

1. Just prior to today’s story, Jesus’ identity was established from on high by the word of the Father at his baptism. Read Matthew 3:16-17. What does the Father say about Jesus?
2. According to Scripture, it was the Holy Spirit who led Jesus out into the desert to be tempted. Why would the Spirit do that? Has God ever led you through difficult circumstances? In times like that, why is it important to remember God is with us?
3. What is the first thing the devil called into question (v. 3a)? Why did Jesus not feel the need to *prove* his identity? What gave him confidence and strength?
4. On what basis do *we* believe in Jesus, even if we can’t “prove” this truth to others?
5. What were the three temptations that the devil set before Jesus?
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
6. What did Jesus use to respond to the devil? How can we use this same resource in times of testing?
7. In what ways does the devil attack us in our lives as followers of Jesus? What are some of the doubts and fears that the devil throws at us? How can we rely on God’s strength rather than our own?
8. Read Hebrews 2:14 - 3:2a. The Bible says that Jesus experienced the same kinds of struggles and temptation that all people do. Why is this a reassuring thing to know? How does that “help those who are being tempted”?