

One Desire Fast, Part 1: “Jesus Fasting”

Matthew 4:1-11

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[SERMON MANUSCRIPT]

Introduction

We started ODF today, Sunday, at sunrise and we'll be going for the next fourteen days fasting from social media and food. For the details of this, please refer to our digital handout, “ODF 2021-Fasting Info.” Accompanying our fast, we will be preaching a short series called, “One Desire Fast” as well. Today we will look at “Jesus fasting” and next Sunday we will look at “Jesus feasting,” focusing on our Savior and King to guide us through this year's ODF.

But I'll be honest with you: I hate fasting! I don't like not being able to snack on anything I want to at any time; I don't like that bad breath I get because I haven't eaten; I don't like the pain and discomfort in my stomach; I don't like feeling weak and hangry. Who's with me?

But...I love Jesus! By God's grace I can honestly say that I love him. And I am painfully aware of my own ability to sabotage my love for him: my heart is prone to wander to idols that give me false sense of comfort, security, or pleasure; my body and mind creeps back to bad habits of thinking, believing, and behaving. So because I love Jesus, I choose to fast- to ingrain into my heart, mind, and body that I want to- and actually, desperately need to- treasure Jesus, trust Jesus, and train under Jesus. Amen? Are you with me on this too?

This is the heart and purpose behind the “One Desire Fast”: it is to “fast” from distractions so that we can “feast” on Christ- making space in our lives to worship in his presence, take in and listen to his words, and pray and lay ourselves out before God. I believe God has prepared us this past year in order to bring us to the place to encounter him in significant, comforting, and challenging ways!

Scripture Reading

Today's Scripture, Matthew 4:1-11, is within the introduction section of the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus was preparing for public ministry, after having been miraculously birthed and raised by his earthly family in his hometown of Nazareth. John the Baptist showed up on the scene, the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophets who said that he would prepare the way for God's promised King. And before Jesus actually started his public ministry, there was one more thing that he had to do, which is Matthew 4:1-11. This is God's Word...

Matthew 4:1-11 (ESV):

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” 4 But he answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple 6 and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” 7 Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” 10 Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” 11 Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Proposition

The “one thing” - the main message of Matthew 4:1-11- and what I want us to take to heart from today’s sermon is this...

Treasure, trust, and train under Jesus, the one true hero!

Organizational Statement

We’ll go through this passage of Scripture in five brief parts:

1. The set-up (1)
2. The first temptation (2-4)
3. The second temptation (5-7)
4. The third temptation (8-10)
5. The conclusion (11)

Prayer

Let’s pray one more time to prepare to listen as God speaks to us through his Word...

Heavenly Father, you alone are worthy to be treasured, trusted, and trained under. By the power of your Spirit and your Word, transform us to see Jesus as one, only, true, and real hero of the world. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

→ **Transition:** Let’s jump right in and...

Sermon Outline

I. See verse 1: The Set-Up

A. In v. 1, Jesus was intentionally sent into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

1. Jesus Christ is the “last Adam” (perfect man) and the “true Israel” (perfect law-keeper).
 - a) This is remarkable if you think about this: Jesus had just been baptized and publicly presented as the Son of God. Then immediately after this triumphant event, Jesus *was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.* The Holy Spirit, who had visibly rested upon Jesus during his baptism, now led Jesus into the wilderness. God led him into this risky, difficult situation! The word “tempted” means to attempt to cause someone to sin- this was what the devil was going to try to do; this was what Jesus himself walked into, sovereignly set up by God.
 - b) So WHY did the Spirit send Jesus into this temptation? It was because Jesus was called to be the “last Adam,” as it says in Romans 5:15.

Romans 5:15 (NLT): *15 But there is a great difference between Adam’s sin and God’s gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is*

God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ.

What this means is that Jesus was the representative of humanity who would succeed where the "first Adam" failed; the first Adam failed by disobeying God and all of his descendants- all of us- inherited this sinful nature and the punishment due to sinners, God's wrath. But Jesus is regarded as the "last Adam" who would be tempted but not sin, succeeding to obey God perfectly.

- c) It was also because Jesus was called to be the "true Israel": the original Israel failed in the wilderness- they were given the Law that highlighted God's holiness but also exposed their sinfulness. They complained, rebelled, and sinned in every which way possible; they failed to be what God had called them to be- a holy nation, a royal priesthood, and a light to the other nations. But Jesus is regarded as the "true Israel" who would be in the wilderness but remain holy, be the great high priest who would intercede as a sacrifice for his people, and be a light for all to be reconciled with God.
- d) Context: So the stage is set up now for a series of temptations. What we'll see in Jesus in the wilderness, as the "last Adam" and "true Israel," is that he is the only true hero that we can trust and treasure. And we can also learn from his example how to train to be disciples of Jesus who love him and live consistently as people who say that we love him. Our world is full of brokenness and desperately looks for heroes in its myths, movies, and media: Superman, Spiderman, Captain Marvel, X-Men, and on and on. Sometimes we even make the mistake to put our hope in a person: president, pastor, or celebrity. But in Christ we have the only, true hero- God who became man to rescue us!

→ **Transition:** So that's the set-up, now let's...

Sermon Outline (continued)

II. See verses 2-4: The First Temptation

A. In vv. 2-4, Jesus was tempted to change stones into bread because he was hungry.

2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." 4 But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

1. The spirit of the age says, "Depend on yourself," but Jesus says, "I am the bread of life."
 - a) If the primary reason that Jesus was sent by the Holy Spirit to go the wilderness was to be tempted by the devil, then v. 2 highlights the action that Jesus took in light of this test of temptation: he fasted- did not eat food- for forty days and forty nights. But WHY did Jesus fast? First, it was to deny himself of his human desires: fasting is a discipline or habit of training oneself to say "no" to a human desire (like for food) to reinforce saying "no" to other, sinful desires. Second, it was to align himself to God the Father and his will, in resistance to the devil's temptation. The Father sent the Son to go to the cross- this was Jesus' mission- and he focused on pleasing God in this way.
 - b) The devil- called "the tempter" here- tempted Jesus first with this in v. 3: *If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.* Look at this carefully: the devil wasn't wondering IF Jesus was the Son of God, as if he was asking Jesus to show him proof; he was challenging Jesus' IDENTITY. He was saying, "Since you are God's son, prove it! Use your power to provide for yourself."

- c) **Context:** The spirit of the age says, “Depend on yourself,” doesn’t it? We are often tempted to depend on ourselves for our own lives: our own security, pleasure, contentment, or purpose. The truth is that we should work hard and faithfully...AND trust God completely. This is the heart of the Old Testament laws regarding the Sabbath: Israel was to work six days and then rest one (to train themselves to trust and treasure God). But just as that was so hard to do for Israel, this is so hard for us to do! It’s hard to train ourselves to trust God and treasure God instead of depending on ourselves.
- d) But Jesus held onto the truth that God provides everything for life, especially his Word. Jesus responded to the devil’s challenge in v. 4 by referencing Deuteronomy 8:3.

Deuteronomy 8:3 (NLT): *3 Yes, he humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.*

Now there’s a lot of great insights into why Jesus responded with the Old Testament passage as we think about its background.

- e) Moses taught Israel to remember God when they moved into the Promised Land. He reminded them that God had humbled them in the wilderness; he let them experience the pangs of hunger; and he provided by sending them manna to eat. God made Israel know that he not only provided bread, but also the spiritual nourishment that they ultimately needed.
- f) Jesus talked about bread all the time, as recorded in the Gospels! In his model of prayer for his disciples, he prayed, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11)- so we depend on the Father for our daily provision. In his last meal before his crucifixion, Jesus took bread and broke it and then said to his disciples, “Take, eat; this is my body” (Matthew 26:26). Jesus’ body was broken in order to feed and give new spiritual life to those who would believe in him.
- g) **Context:** God wants to train us to **DEPEND** on him and to **NOURISH** ourselves in his Word. This is what fasting is, right? As we’ve said, fasting isn’t a demonstration of our righteousness- it is training to depend on him and to nourish ourselves with spiritual bread- especially because we are tempted so often to depend on ourselves. I just think about how I tackle work- which is probably how many of you do as well (or you students tackle studies): I am tempted to dive into my work because I want to (or need to) finish it and it’s important (which is fine!). But the real struggle is sacrificing time for work to be in solitude with God in the Word and prayer; the struggle is sacrificing time for work to be in biblical community with family, friends, LIFE group, and church. I easily slip into depending on myself and neglecting the soul-nourishment that I absolutely need.

→ **Transition:** So we just talked about the first temptation and Jesus’ response. The spirit of the age says, “Depend on yourself,” but Jesus says, “I am the bread of life.” Now let’s...

Sermon Outline (continued)

III. See verses 5-7: The Second Temptation

- A. In vv. 5-7, Jesus was tempted to test God by jumping off the highest point of the temple.

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple 6 and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels

concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" 7 Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

1. The spirit of the age says, "God doesn't care," but Jesus says, "Seek first my kingdom."
 - a) The devil took Jesus to Jerusalem, to the pinnacle of the temple, and he challenged Jesus again in v. 6: "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Friends, do you notice that the devil knows the Scriptures? There's a difference between knowing and submitting to God's Word though! As Jesus said that in the first test he lives by every word that comes from God's mouth, the devil countered by throwing Psalm 91:11-12 back at him.
 - b) The devil presented a situation and challenged Jesus to test if God's words were true. His temptation was simply this: "Let's go to the top of the temple. Will God save you if you jump from here?" The thrust behind this temptation is, "In this relationship with God, will he really care for me?" Or in other words, "How can I know that I can trust God if I give him my whole life?"
 - c) In v. 7, Jesus quoted another passage from the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 6:16, when Israel was in the wilderness (Exodus 17). God delivered them from Egypt and they were on their way to the Promised Land, but they started to complain and demanded water to drink. What they ended up doing was they quarreled with Moses, grumbled against God, and actually wanted to go back to Egypt, the land of their enslavement. This was the time that Israel "put the Lord their God to the test."
 - d) What Israel failed to see is that the Lord God had made a covenant with Israel: it was an uneven, gracious covenant that God extended to this nation; he made Israel into HIS people; he had saved them from Egypt and promised a new homeland. And along the way, he also promised to care for them! But in this situation and sadly so many other ones, Israel failed to trust that God cared for them.
 - e) And for Jesus in this situation, the devil was tempting Jesus to do something- humanly speaking- risky but pointless. The proper word is "vainglorious": it was doing something so self-centered for the sole purpose to arrogantly show off. So in other words the devil was saying, "Do this totally pointless act of jumping to prove that the angels will lift you up." But remember, Jesus had a mission- it wasn't to waste his efforts on vainglorious stunts to prove that God cared for him- but to be a servant and die to save sinners. He sought first and foremost his Kingdom!
 - f) Context: We are often tempted to doubt God's care for us, aren't we? But God DOES care for us with a COVENANT love- this covenant was signed, sealed, and delivered by Jesus himself. This was the mission that he stuck with from the beginning (in this temptation in the wilderness) until the end (in his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension). We look at the cross- despite all the hardships we face- and can see that we can TRUST that God cares for us.
 - g) Context: Sometimes we don't see it just by ourselves, but when we have more pieces of the puzzle, we can see it more clearly. This is what I experienced in being a part of our church this past holiday season. Every Christmas we always get a handful of gifts from brothers and sisters in the church, but this year we received so many gifts that we literally ran out of room in our refrigerator, pantry, and counter (and I feel most of it in my waistline)! Nickey and my conclusion is that during this pandemic- as we have walked through all sorts of struggles together: family, finances, singleness, marriage, barrenness, depression, anxiety, sickness, and even death- we ALL have STILL experienced God's care and that was the reason for the outpouring of generosity and thoughtfulness we received. God DOES care for us overflowing! May we continue to know, experience, and pass that care on to others, church!

- h) **Context:** We can follow Christ's example of seeking God's kingdom first, because he taught in Matthew 6 that our Father does take care of our every need. He said specifically:

Matthew 6:33 (NLT): *Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.*

Jesus demonstrates that we don't need to test our Father's care for us- we can look at the cross and SEE his care for us and trust that he does care for us as we pursue him and his Kingdom too (which is directly related to the next temptation).

- **Transition:** So that was the second temptation and Jesus' response. The spirit of the age says, "God doesn't care" but Jesus says, "Seek first my kingdom." Now let's...

Sermon Outline (continued)

IV. See verses 8-10: The Third Temptation

A. In vv. 8-10, Jesus was tempted to worship the devil in exchange for the world's glories.

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." 10 Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"

1. The spirit of the age says, "Pursue your own desires," but Jesus says, "Take up your cross."
 - a) In verses 8-9, the devil took Jesus to a place where he could see all the earthly kingdoms- the sources of power, authority, and fame in the world. He said to Jesus, *All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.* The Bible does describe the devil as having temporary, partial- yet very real and powerful- rule in the world and in people (see Ephesians 2:1-3).
 - b) The devil subtly shifted his tactic here: he invited Jesus to worship him and in exchange, Jesus would gain these kingdoms of the world that the devil possessed. He didn't challenge Jesus identity; the devil challenged Jesus' purpose. As a human being, Jesus could've thought: "Is my purpose to worship God alone? Or is for something better for me to pursue right here?" The devil tempted Jesus to avoid the suffering he'd face in his life and in his death on the cross. Even more, he tempted Jesus to forsake his future of greater, eternal glory. The spirit of the age INVITES us to "pursue our own desires" right now, trading them for the call to deny themselves and taking up our crosses to follow Christ.
 - c) But the truth is that God alone is worthy of our worship- no matter the cost- now and forever. Jesus firmly rejected the devil's offer and forcefully cast him out of his presence, saying in v. 10: *"Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"* Jesus stood on Deuteronomy 6:13 this time, reinforcing his sole and wholehearted allegiance to God the Father.
 - d) Back then, in Moses' teaching to Israel, he emphasized to fear and serve the Lord God alone. There would be many other so-called "gods" that neighboring nations worshiped and that they would be tempted to follow. They had to choose: the easier, self-gratifying pursuit of their own desires or the hard, faith-requiring, self-denying pursuit of God's promises. Sadly, Israel repeatedly committed this spiritual adultery, thinking there was something better out there than God.

- e) But Jesus is the “last Adam” and “true Israel” who remained true to fear the Lord God and to serve him. Later in Jesus’ life, the night before he was sentenced to death, he faced another test. That time it would be Peter, his own disciple, who REBUKED Jesus and tried to convince him to not go to the cross. Jesus said something very similar in rebuke of Peter: “Get behind me Satan!”
- f) Jesus went to the cross to save hopeless sinners like us and to bring us back to God the Father. He followed up on this incident with these words in Matthew 16:25-26:

Matthew 16:25-26 (NLT): *25 If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. 26 And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?*

He urges his disciples to train in Jesus’ discipleship process: to keep letting go of their own lives and to choose true, eternal life in him. Both decisions are costly and the results are eternal- but choosing self means finite, fleeting benefits while choosing Christ means infinite, lasting benefits.

- g) Context: Being God’s child is by God’s grace alone, by faith alone, in Christ alone. Faith is expressed in this lifelong path that entails denying ourselves of pursuing our own desires and taking up our crosses. But taking up our crosses this way is the path of trusting, treasuring, and training under Jesus- and it’s a path of joy, contentment, security, and purpose as we walk it by faith. We actually GAIN life now and forever!
- h) Context: Church, let me speak frankly to us all (I’m including myself): We don’t know when this pandemic will end. We don’t know what other hardships and challenges we’ll face in life- personally and globally. But what we can rally around together is to grow in THIS kind of intimacy with Christ in this season. I can’t persuade you, humanly speaking, but Jesus can. For those who are seeking truth and true life, I want to invite you to follow Jesus. For those who are part of the church, I want to invite you to take up your cross every day and follow Jesus!

→ **Transition**: We just finished the third temptation and Jesus’ response. The spirit of the age says, “Seek selfish gain now,” but Jesus says, “Take up your cross now.” Now let’s...

Sermon Outline (continued)

V. See verse 11: The Conclusion

A. In v. 11, Jesus was exhausted but passed this test to be the Savior of the world.

11 *Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.*

1. **Life Application**: Use this season to treasure, trust, and train under Jesus, the one true hero!
 - a) The narrative concluded with Jesus exhausted- this forty days and forty nights of fasting and being tempted by the devil was taxing for Jesus. But he also experienced God’s angels ministering to him, as stated in v. 11.
 - b) But also, Jesus triumphed over the devil and passed this test as the “last Adam” and “true Israel”: he remained faithful and obedient to the Father; he remained holy and righteous in the wilderness. Jesus is the one and only “hero”: he is the ONLY way to be saved from ourselves. He passed this test that we did not and could not ever pass. He was tempted, but did not doubt God’s care, purpose, or worthiness. And the amazingly comforting aspect of this is Jesus understands what we go through!

- c) **Context:** So let's TREASURE and TRUST Jesus this way, as our one and only hero! We need to meditate on this- the Gospel- and soak it all in! We ADMIT that we depend on ourselves, doubt God's care, and deny the cross. We ADMIRE Jesus for going through the testing and passing with flying colors. We accept his service and ministry to us, humbling ourselves, surrendering ourselves to him.
- d) **Context:** We can also TRAIN under Jesus, to conform our character to be like his. Spiritual "training" includes Word and prayer, community, evangelism, and serving. Also we fast to create space to feast on Jesus; we receive more grace in our sin and weakness; we align ourselves with God's heart and purpose. Participate in the One Desire Fast and Online Church Conference. We do these things together to grow a holy desire to treasure, trust, and train under Jesus Christ, our one true hero!

→ **Transition:** Let's go back to our live Sunday Celebration and have some time to personally respond to God's Word.

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