

LUKE 4:1-15 THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

The book of Luke is found in the New Testament. It is one of the 4 books about Jesus life, written by a doctor called Luke. He was not a Jew, and would have been a very well educated man. A companion of Paul, he was a people person. He was writing to Roman official Theophilus, to give a researched and accurate account from eye witnesses of Jesus life.

Why am I preaching through Luke? At the very core of Christianity is a relationship with Jesus. If we are not in love with Jesus, if we are not passionate about Jesus, then our faith is going to become cold and boring stale. Luke has some key themes as well of prayer, discipleship, and mission and God's heart for the poor that I believe are very relevant to us here at Central. Therefore, this year I want us to rediscover Jesus.

Read Luke 4:1-15. We have this image of Jesus wandering around the pretty countryside telling nice stories. Yet Jesus ministered into a war-ravaged land that was incredibly volatile. Galilee, the province where Jesus grew up, was known as both a country backwater and a breeding place for revolutionaries. It is hard to imagine Jesus being born into a more volatile time or place in history.

Some of you have come from war ravished or violent lands. We are fortunate in NZ that most of us have not experienced this sort of environment. However, for some of your life feels a bit like a war zone now: conflict, abuse, stress. As Jesus starts his public ministry, he finds himself in a spiritual warzone with 40 days of intense temptation.

Paul says in Eph 6 that we battle against principalities and powers. This is the big picture stuff: the systems that are wrong. I.e. Corruption, greed, materialism. Demonic powers can rule over cities and nations with false beliefs and worldviews. These are hard things to combat. In NZ we are living in a country where there is no such thing as immorality, no such thing as truth. But sometimes it is hard for us to see this warfare. It is a bit like the cyber warfare being waged against our computers. We do not see it until it is too late.

At a lower level. Paul says he struggles to do what he wants to do, and easily does what he does not want to do. We can relate to this one more. The temptation
to eat that bit of cake when we know we should not.
stay up late watching TV when we know we should go to bed

click on to a website that is not good
share that bit of gossip that we heard
buy that item that we know we don't really need.

I think we can all relate to this kind of battle. It is not necessary to read this passage and assume that Jesus saw Satan face to face. This mind have been in his mind. In addition, of course Jesus temptation is unique because he is God and we are not. Actually, at their root these temptations are common to us as well.

Firstly, Jesus was tempted to turn stones into bread. At its essence, Jesus was tempted to put physical things above God. We see this in the very first temptation in the Garden of Eden: "Did God really say you can't eat any fruit?" This is a total distortion. God had given them this beautiful garden. Only one tree was forbidden. There is not a spiritual physical divide. God has given us a good world. Arts, music, food, sport. However, how often are we tempted to place these things about our relationship with God? The world says: great art, great music, great food, great sex, and great sport this is life.

Jesus quotes. Deuteronomy 8:3. Yes he humbled you by letting you go hungry and feeding you with manna. He did it to teach you the people need more than bread for their life. Real life comes from feeding on every word of the Lord.

Jesus said I have come to bring life. The enemy wants to say. "God doesn't want you to have life. He is trying to stop you having all this stuff. He is a killjoy. Wants you to be deprived." This is clever, pitting the good things that God has given against God himself. What we do is start making those things more important than God does. We buy into the lie. This is life. Good food, good job, good holiday, good home. This is life. The Scripture does not say cannot or should not live without these things. But we make them central. We forget that life comes out of relationship with God and His Word. We are to prioritize time with God, in worship, in being conscious of him and of coming together with his people. We are constantly tempted to think we can live in the material world alone and that this will satisfy us. Yet ultimately, it leaves us empty. This is where the Sabbath comes in: a time when we stop chasing after the material things and realize that life is found in God.



The second temptation was for all the kingdom of the world, in return for Jesus bowing down to Satan. He is tempting Jesus with power. Satan promised Eve power. "You will become just like God." This is the temptation for power. Again, we might struggle to see ourselves as having an issue with power. But we all have power in one way or another. We all have influence. Even if we don't have a title of leader, we all exercise power. The temptation to power is at work when we:

- # always want to be in charge
- # put others down
- # seek out influential people only
- # don't like to be accountable to others
- # behave in ways that are controlling.
- # seek to impress others

Those in any leadership role are particularly vulnerable to the temptation of power. This is why Jesus said. "If you want to be a leader, you need to be a servant." Matthew 20:26 Opposite of power is servanthood. We are never to grow out of servanthood. Whenever we start thinking: someone else should do that now power is starting to lurk.

The third temptation was to pride. Satan takes Jesus up to the highest point of the temple and says if you are God jumps off and angels will save you. This was probably the royal porch and the southeast corner, which looms over a cliff to the Kidron Valley 150 metres below.

The temptation to proof himself: to do something spectacular to test God. Satan promised Adam and Eve that they would know everything if they ate the fruit, appealing to pride. Pride is subtle and we often don't recognize it at work in ourselves. Jonathan Edwards gives 7 ways pride manifests:

- # Fault finding. See faults in others, not ourselves
- # Harsh towards others sins; judgemental
- # Superficiality. Worried what others think of us, rather than reality in our hearts
- # defensiveness when we are corrected or rebuked.
- # Coming to God casually without reverence
- # Seeking attention.
- # Neglecting others we see as less important

I would add another. Unwillingness to let others serve us. Pride is the opposite of humility. Bible repeatedly says God opposes the proud, but love the humble.

The passage ends with saying that Satan left Jesus for a time. Doesn't matter how old we are. How long we have been Christians. Satan is constantly watching. Lurking. Waiting for when we are vulnerable. When

we feel hurt. When we are sick. When we are tired. When we are stressed.

Some here today. Very aware of area that you are struggling in. Ongoing struggle. Seem to trip up time and time again. Discouraged and condemned by it. Tried repeatedly but keep falling to temptation. Or feeling weighed down right now by guilt over something. Good news.

1. Jesus understands. Heb 4:14-16
2. Jesus came to set us free from sin and guilt. He does not tire of forgiving us as we confess our sins to him. Romans 8:1
3. The Holy Spirit has not left you and Wants to empower you. No temptation is unique and God want to show you a way through. Often that is by changing our focus off the struggle and onto God. Romans 10:12-13
4. Temptations power is broken when we bring it into the light. Confess it to someone. Ask someone to keep us accountable.
5. Jesus dealt with temptation because he knew Scripture. If the only Bible you get is on Sunday morning that is not going to cut it in the spiritual warfare that you are in. God has given us what we need to deal with temptation. Holy Spirit, Word of God, community of believers. High Priest interceding for us.

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REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

Are Christians guilty of blaming Satan for what is our own desires?

How do you place material things above God?

Did the lists of how pride and power can be in our lives bring any revelation that these might be at work in your life?

What has been the most helpful for you to overcome temptation?

What Scripture would be helpful for you to memorize for an ongoing temptation? Brainstorm together.

Pray for each other for one area you struggle in.



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