

WHEN TEMPTED WHAT IS YOUR ANSWER Matt. 4: 1- 11 St Alban's Church
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Having fasted for 40 days and 40 nights, Jesus was on the edge of his mental and physical strength; he was vulnerable to sin. At that time of crisis, the Devil comes to Jesus with three temptations which mirror these three major areas of Life.

The question is how we are going to respond.

1. The first of these three MAJOR AREAS of life is our need for food

Look at any newspaper and you will find one or two articles on food. You'll also find something about losing weight or about people who become obsessive in losing weight!

We love food – but so often don't eat the right things. There is a multi-million-pound industry out there attached to our guilt – an industry built up on concocting diets

Jesus had committed himself to fast and pray. He didn't have to, but he had. Fasting and prayer was a time when Jesus gave himself exclusively to seek God. So when the Devil comes along and tells him what to do, Jesus has a choice. He can either listen to him or ignore him.

There was nothing wrong with eating bread. The question is, who was going to direct Jesus' life. Note it wasn't his heavenly Father who told Jesus to turn the stones into bread and then eat; it was the Devil. Jesus did not want to be led by the Devil.

Jesus' reply was poignant:

"It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Who are we going to listen to?

2. The second of these MAJOR AREAS of life is the need for our identity to be recognised

We don't want to be a NOBODY, yet it leaves us vulnerable to the sin of being self-seeking.

Jesus, the Son of God, could have proclaimed his greatness by jumping off the Temple like superman and God would have sent his angels to protect him. But that wasn't the plan that God had for Jesus' life, because it would have shortcut the Cross. Imagine what an impact that would have had in the Jerusalem Post the following day! Look how Jesus handled the temptation:

But that wasn't God's way – it was the Devil who suggested it – Jesus wanted to live his life the way God ordained it

3 The last of these three MAJOR AREAS of life is our need to worship

Yet it leaves us vulnerable to the sin of worshipping the wrong thing. There is a built in need in man to worship. The question is how do we fulfil it; WHO are we going to worship?

i) God – the Holy Trinity – the Father, Son and Holy

ii) that unholy Trinity of I, myself and me

We want to be in charge – in some form or other.

Sometimes people just can't see that we are worshipping the wrong thing. They think their motivation is right. Let me give you some examples:

1. Making money for you and your family to be comfortable

We see people striving to better themselves to get to the top in business. They spend hours at the office making money – and neglect their family – and where they have a faith in God too, sometimes: No one on their death bed ever said: I wish I had spent more time in the office

2. Another example is worshipping doing great things

Many of us have dreamt about doing great things whether it be to earn lots of money like Bill Gates, Steve Jobs or Mark Zuckerberg; to play a violin like Yehudi Menuhin, to paint like Pablo Picasso or to influence the affairs of nations through politics - like Margaret Thatcher, Boris Johnson, Jeremy Corbyn or Nigel Farage - whatever your political inclination is!

We might even dress it up as leaving the world a better place for our having been here. But few of us want to do it anonymously!! We want the accolade of being recognised as being successful. And here the devil was handing it to Jesus on a plate. "You want to be the boss, Jesus?" the Devil says: "I can give it to you. Just bow down to me."

Jesus replied – and it showed where his priorities were: "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

Conclusion

All human beings are open to temptation. Recognising it is half the battle. Not one of us is exempt. Even Jesus wasn't exempt, despite the fact he had a divine nature as well as a human one

Temptation is NOT A SIN. It's giving into temptation that is the sin. It is the sin of the second glance that brings about our downfall.

I can exercise choice – just as Jesus did. God has given us our lives, and the choice of how we live it is ours. What is your choice today - to overcome or be overcome?

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