

*Thy Will Be Done...in the test!*

Shepherd's Grace Church

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Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.<sup>2</sup> He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished.<sup>3</sup> The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."<sup>4</sup> But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple,<sup>6</sup> saying 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, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor;<sup>9</sup> and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"<sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him. (Matt. 4: 1-11) (also read Gen. 3: 1-8)

The word Adam in Hebrew means man. Further, Adam is from the Hebrew word Adamah, meaning ground. We are familiar with the Genesis story enough to know that just before the passage we read today, God created Adam from the ground and created Eve from him. The purpose of understanding creation in this way is to understand the dependence men and women have upon each other. The understanding comes best from a song by Peter, Paul and Mary. "As it was in the beginning, is now until the end. Woman draws her life from man and gives it back again. There is love! O, there is love." In reading the story, we begin to understand that we are all created for relationship! We are all created from the ground and as we learned on Ash Wednesday, we are all dust of the earth and to dust we shall return. (Gen. 3: 16) In this knowledge, we are all the same. We are human, we are creatures, and we are all subject to the laws of nature. As humans, however, as God's creation in God's own image and likeness we are created beyond the laws of nature. We are created as the ultimate expression of freedom.

Freedom is the essence of that which is summed up in our Hebrew lesson for today. The serpent came and talked to the people. Listen to what I am saying here. The serpent came and talked to the people! The man and the woman were both there. Look at verse 6. They were there together. They were equal! They were free to hear the words of the serpent and they were free to respond. They were equally responsible and equally participatory! Their participation made necessary the following set of rules:

1. IF YOU'RE CHOKING ON AN ICE CUBE, SIMPLY POUR A CUP OF BOILING WATER DOWN YOUR THROAT. PRESTO! THE BLOCKAGE WILL INSTANTLY REMOVE ITSELF.

2. AVOID CUTTING YOURSELF WHEN SLICING VEGETABLES BY GETTING SOMEONE ELSE TO HOLD THE VEGETABLES WHILE YOU CHOP.

3. AVOID ARGUMENTS ABOUT THE TOILET SEAT - USE THE SINK.

4. FOR HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE SUFFERERS - SIMPLY CUT YOURSELF AND BLEED FOR A FEW MINUTES, THUS REDUCING THE PRESSURE ON YOUR VEINS. REMEMBER TO USE A TIMER.

5. A MOUSE TRAP PLACED ON TOP OF YOUR ALARM CLOCK WILL PREVENT YOU FROM ROLLING OVER AND GOING BACK TO SLEEP AFTER YOU HIT THE SNOOZE BUTTON.

6. IF YOU HAVE A BAD COUGH, TAKE A LARGE DOSE OF LAXATIVES. THEN YOU'LL BE AFRAID TO COUGH.

7. YOU ONLY NEED TWO TOOLS IN LIFE - WD-40 AND DUCT TAPE. IF IT DOESN'T MOVE AND SHOULD, USE THE WD-40. IF IT SHOULDN'T MOVE AND DOES, USE THE DUCT TAPE.

8. REMEMBER - EVERYONE SEEMS NORMAL UNTIL YOU GET TO KNOW THEM.

9. IF YOU CAN'T FIX IT WITH A HAMMER, YOU'VE GOT AN ELECTRICAL PROBLEM.

When the serpent offered temptation to the world, and the world accepted problems were created. Before temptation there were no problems. Creation was working because creation was following the instructions of the creator. Have you ever noticed that when things break down or when they do not go as expected often the last thing consulted is the operating manual. We fiddle and flirt and fool around with the broken object. We take it apart and we try to put it back together again only to find we need duct tape and hammers and we still end up with extra parts that no one seems to know what to do with. Think about the guidance given earlier. None of it involves reading the directions. If Adam and Eve had just read the directions they would have recognized that in temptation they were not following the directions but instead exercising their freedom. They wanted to do it themselves. As a result the left over part is sin! The potential for it to come out existed all along but only in our human ego was it able to be discovered!

In the book of Romans, the apostle says that by the first Adam, sin entered the world, by the second Adam, sin is reconciled. Today, we meet both these Adams. We meet the one who is the typical man, reluctant to ask for directions, reluctant to seek clarification and we meet the other, the rare one who is willing to read and study the manual and follow the steps. The second man does not need duct tape and a hammer. This one only needs the manual! Not only does he check his divinity, he checks his humanity at the door to his difficulty. He is willing to set aside his ego and submit to God's action. In short, He is willing to be obedient.

His obedience is the secret He has come to share in His journey to the cross. We as humans seek to look for all kinds of hidden meanings in God's plan for reconciliation. We look for sacrifice, we look for perfection, we look for God's purposes in creating the universe but at the end of the conversation, we must look for obedience! The first Adam was disobedient. The second Adam models obedience! A large part of what Jesus wants us to learn on our way to the cross is obedience.

Some of us grew up back in the '60's. Ok, some of us grew up long before the '60's but in the 60's in particular there was an expression we all wanted to use to express our dissatisfaction with government, with economics, with our parents...especially with our parents. That expression..."I just need to find myself, man!" I just need to find myself. We had, and continue to have the notion that we need to look somewhere else for who we are. We feel like we are broken and we have no clue as to how to fix ourselves. We have this spare part and we just cannot figure out where it goes! We try the hammer, we try the duct tape. We try the WD 40 and no matter how hard we try, we just cannot make ourselves fit together. We wonder what it is that we are doing wrong that makes our life feel so out of sorts and we never even think about reading the manual!

Have you ever watched little kids as they first begin to make connections with their relatives? They begin to associate saying, "So, Nana is mom's mom and grandma is dad's mom." They say, so Uncle Jim is dad's brother and Aunt Jane is mom's sister." They work their way through their family tree and they put things together slowly recognizing that in their association with their family they have become themselves. Through their relationships, they recognize who they are. They recognize that they are their relationships. Kids learn this early and they learn it easily. They know from it who they can trust and who they cannot. Somewhere, however that knowledge, that part of the instruction manual gets forgotten...or gets lost...or goes unread! They allow their own ego to replace their instruction and they become distrustful of those who they were made to be in relationship. They just "Want to Find themselves...man!"

Jesus teaches us a different way this morning. He teaches us the value of trust and obedience to the relationships He has come to know. He teaches us almost immediately. He is led out by the Spirit into the wilderness. He does not resist. He trusts that the Spirit has a purpose in leading Him and He goes willingly. In the wilderness, He is taught a spiritual discipline. He is taught to fast and pray. I suspect He already knew of fasting and prayer but as fully human, He learns even more fully! We can all add to that which we already know!

When Matthew's listeners hear His story of temptation they are reminded that He is the first born of his family. He is the one who will be the leader of the family. They begin to associate him with themselves. They know they are missing something. "They just want to find themselves...man!" They recognize that just as He is first born, so are they God's first born. They are the chosen ones, the ones who are to lead all the nations of the earth to the "One True God of All Creation!"

They recognize this first in the symbolism of 40. 40 is a significant number for the Hebrew people. It is understood to be the length of a generation. It is also the number of years the people wandered in the wilderness after being rescued from slavery in Egypt. Jesus' 40 day fast is a reminder of their 40 year journey. It is a reminder of the hardships and the struggles, but it is also a reminder of the doubt the people expressed as they did not trust God! The people hearing Matthew for the first time immediately became uneasy because of this association. Those hearing these words today should become uneasy as well. We too have failed to trust God for our provision. We have as a people of faith failed to provide leadership in times of crisis. Instead, we have joined the world in wondering where Our God is when times have gotten difficult. We have tried to "Find ourselves...man" instead of finding God's instruction. We have been led into temptation!

Because we have been led, perhaps we should listen to how to respond. We pray the Lord's prayer, "lead us not into temptation," and we know God cannot lead us here so we realize that we have not followed God here. Never the less, here we are! Now, how do we get out? We can try to figure it out for ourselves, we can end up with the extra parts, we can try the hammer and the duct tape or we can do as Jesus does. We can read the manual!

When the tempter comes, he refers to Jesus as "Son of God." Most versions of the Bible translate the word before that phrase as "if" but the better Greek translates the word "Since." Satan does not attempt to deny who Jesus is. Satan was aware of the birth in Matt. 1 and the pronouncement of "Emanuel," God with us! He was no doubt informed of the or even present when God's voice came from the heavens announcing "This is my Son, the beloved," at Jesus' baptism. It is pointless for him to deny it now or even to call it into question.

Satan would know that other "Kings" of the Hebrew people had been called "Son of God." (2 Sam. 7: 14) and that the Roman emperors were also called "Son of God." He would have been aware that people of this culture regarded their leaders as deity. What he also knew is that deity did not go hungry. His first temptation was one aimed at placing Jesus with the elite. He was saying, what King's son ever goes hungry.

Jesus' response was to associate himself, not with the elite who always took care of themselves but with the people of the margin. He quotes Deuteronomy 8: 3 saying that humans do not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God! Jesus reads the manual and instead of "finding himself...man, humbles himself. In portraying Him this way, Matthew reminds his Hebrew listeners that Jesus trusts God for His provision. Unlike those "first born" of God's chosen who quarreled with God and with Moses in the wilderness, Jesus is willing to rely solely on God. He is obedient in his daily bread!

Satan then takes him to the “Holy City,” to Jerusalem, and places him on the pinnacle of the temple. There, Jesus is hanging by a thread! If He were we, he might even feel like He is clinging for dear life! Satan invites Jesus to throw himself down. Satan quotes psalm 91 about Jesus and reminds Him that He will not be harmed. Once again, Jesus does not rely on his human intellect to overcome temptation. Perhaps he could have thrown himself down but he might have ended up with broken parts. Instead, he relies on the manual. He looks to scripture to discover the proper repair procedure. This time, He quotes Deuteronomy 6: 16. You will not put the Lord your God to the test, he says.

I wonder as we struggle in our daily lives how many of us are tempted to blame God for the situation we are in. We find ourselves in financial difficulty, in trouble in marriages, in crisis in our business and we blame God. We think it is God’s fault we are where we are. We do not remember that God is good all the time and all the time...all the time, God is good. Jesus remembered the manual. He remembered the instruction and He trusted God as an instruction to us. Financial difficulties, marriage struggles, business dealings will be temporary. God is permanent. God’s presence can be trusted and God’s desire to be in relationship with us is forever. Our response in difficulty should be the same as Jesus’ response this morning. Not “Give us enough bread for the rest of our lives,” but “Thy will be done.” That part comes before provision and before all else except praise!

When the Hebrew people heard that they would have been reminded of the reason God led them out of slavery! In Exodus 3, God tells Moses to rescue them so they can come into the wilderness and worship! God is worthy of worship, even in the wilderness! Even in the wild and seemingly unsolvable situations of our daily lives, God is worthy of worship. God is worthy of trust. He led the people out of the desert and God will lead you and me out also. Thy will be done! Thy will be done in the test!

Even as the people are reminded of God’s presence when they are hanging on by a thread and invited to trust in the very face of danger, they are invited to welcome God’s will and put God’s plan ahead of their own. We are invited to that understanding also. Sometimes it seems as if we just cannot hang on for another second. God encourages us today to not let go, to persevere and recognize that God, not Satan has brought us to this moment. We do not need to test God but to trust God completely!

We must recognize that trust not only in the difficult moments of our life. Sometimes we are invited to opportunities for great wealth and reward. God encourages us today not to be tempted by those opportunities. Sometimes the cost of riches outweighs the riches themselves. We see this as we listen to Matthew tell us about Satan’s next temptation. Jesus is offered all the riches and kingdoms of the world. All of it can be His, Satan says!

Sometimes we are offered promotions at work. We hear about more money and a great title but do we always weigh that against what will be required. Are we ready for the promotion? Do we have the organizational and technical skills to do the job in the same amount of time as our old job? If not, we will likely have to sacrifice time from somewhere else. Will we have to give up family time? Will we have to give up church time? Will we have to give up time to care for aging parents or young children? What are the costs? Who is our God?

That is really the question Jesus hears Satan ask this morning. Who is your God? Will you sacrifice that which is your eternal life for the temporary successes of this life? “Those who love their life in this world will lose it and those who hate their life will gain life, even up to eternal life,” Jesus says! This morning he demonstrates His commitment to that promise. Jesus knows that to worship Satan would violate His commitment to God. He weighs the costs and says, “Away from me Satan!” He recognizes the cost would far outweigh the reward!

Those who heard Matthew for the first time would be reminded again of their family heritage! They would remember that God called them out not to accomplish great gain but to worship God! They would recognize that their first responsibility was to worship! In Jesus quotation of Deuteronomy 6: 13 they would hear God’s admonishment to them when their ancestors were in the desert! “You shall worship the LORD your God and God alone shall you serve!” Satan’s temptation was not to great wealth, but rather to Great sin! Jesus demonstrates how to resist this temptation.

The people of Israel would recognize that Adam was unable to resist this temptation. It was put into a very pretty package. As Eve offered perhaps she said, come on! We can do this together! We can be like God! Let’s just give it a try! If it doesn’t work out we can always go back to the way things were! They would also recognize the struggle their ancestors had in resisting the temptation in the wilderness!

Jesus uses the lessons God gave in Deuteronomy 6-8 this morning. If you haven’t read these passages in awhile, I invite you to go back and brush up. The people were just getting ready to cross into the promised land, the land “flowing with milk and honey!” God knew they would find great wealth and riches there. God also knew they would find peoples who worshiped other gods. God knew they would be tempted and God wanted to remind them to resist! God wanted them to remember the manna, the quail, the water and to recognize that God had taken care of them in the past and would take care of them in the future! God wanted them to trust God alone for their needs!

God does not object to wealth! Jesus says in John’s gospel, “The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy! I came so that you might have life and have it abundantly.” (John 10: 10) God knows other gods will take what we have in this world and twist it to turn us from the One True God! God wants us to have all the riches, not only of this world but the world to come! God’s promise is one of fullness and we must consider the cost of what others offer in light of what God has planned for us. We should remember that we are to serve only God! God alone is worthy of our praise! God alone has given us life!

The Israelites who wandered in the wilderness had the same manual before them that Jesus uses this morning. They tried to do things themselves! They ended up with pieces left over because they forgot to read the instructions! Before them, Adam had the manual. God said, do not eat of this tree! You will die if you do! God did not mean he would die immediately but that death, being cut off from the riches and abundance of God’s presence would be the result. Adam did not read the manual. He ended up with extra parts and was not able to make creation work.

As Jesus begins his public ministry, he does not do so in the middle of the hustle and bustle of those whom He is called to serve. Instead, he begins at school, away from all the trials and temptations of the life that distracts. He begins on the margins of society so he can learn how to respond to the

temptations that will be put before him. He begins by learning from the manual. He begins with the test! The test tells us that He is familiar with the book...that He is well versed on its practical application...that he is able to use the material to accomplish the projects before Him! Jesus passes the test!

Our task this morning is not to know that Jesus passes the test! We can assume that. He goes on to teach, to preach, to heal and to gain immortal recognition. He goes on to be given control of all the kingdoms of the world and all the riches they contain! We know of His success because twenty one hundred years later we are still talking about it!

Our task this morning is to realize that if we are to follow Jesus all the way to the cross, we will be subject to the same temptations. We will at times find ourselves hungry for the food of this world. We will struggle because we cannot have the food we want that tastes the best. The temptation will not come from what is offered to us. It will be much more insidious than that! The temptation will come in what is offered for our families, for our friends. We will be offered a better life for our children, more things that will make them happy if we will just be willing to sacrifice our integrity!

We will find ourselves hanging from a thread as we fight for our very lives. Perhaps we will struggle over health issues or monetary issues and will be tempted to sacrifice ourselves by thinking we are more important than what we believe! In this way we will put God to the test. Will we give God the chance to pass the test by totally trusting God or will we throw away the manual and try to put our lives together by ourselves?

We will be offered wealth, relationships, possessions that will seem wildly attractive! How will we respond? Will we seek the bread that comes from this world, bread that when stored up will become moldy and stale and spoiled or will we seek the food that comes by every word that comes from the mouth of God?

Will we remember that God teaches us to pray "Give us this day our daily bread," only after praying "Thy Will Be done!" Will we trust God and God alone and allow for God's will in our lives or will we try to take control. Will we throw away the instruction manual or will we remember what dusty old drawer we put it in and dig it out so we can find the right solutions for our lives!

God has given us a choice in our lives. God gave that choice to Adam and Eve and to the Israelites in the wilderness, and to Jesus after His baptism and God gives it to us today! God says, "You can choose to say 'thy will be done,' or I will say, 'thy will be done!'" The response is ours. This is the only question on the test! *Thy Will Be Done...In the Test! Amen!*