

Lenten Series: "It is Written"

Matt 4:1-11

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We are now in 2nd week of the Season known as Lent, and to be exact we are "in between" days 10 & 11. I say we are "in between" days because we don't count Sundays, and so on Sundays - whatever Lenten observances that you may have during the week, you're allowed a break from those things since Sun is a day of corporate worship and a time to be with the Lord and together with God's people.

Back in the year 325, it was at the Council of Nicea where the leaders of the early church first mentioned the idea of Lent to be observed in their churches, and the emphasis back then was that this was supposed to be a special time for new converts to the church as well as for those who wanted to "come back" to the church, in particular for those who denied their faith during times of persecution.

It was a time to welcome new members and a time to welcome back those who had given up on their faith - it had nothing to do with chocolate or red meat or fish on Fridays at least when Lent first started.

Also, when Lent was first established, the period lasted only 1-2 days (or 40 hours) but as time went by they started to lengthen the period, and so the church decided to stretch out those 40 hours to a period of 40 days.

This was to match the same length of time that Jesus spent in the desert wilderness which is our passage for today which comes from Matt. 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered:

"It is written, 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended to him.

Matt 4:1-11 is the famous passage where Jesus faced 3 temptations after fasting for 40 days, and today we'll be spending some time looking at just the 1st temptation where the devil tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread.

In particular, we'll be looking at how Jesus responded to this temptation, and what I hope you'll take away from today's message is to spend more time in God's Word so that like Jesus the Word of God will roll off your lips!

So let's go back and look at the first temptation in vs 3.

The tempter came to [Jesus] and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered: "It is written, 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

What an amazing response!

"It is written, 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

Jesus' first temptation had to do with food. And what made this so tempting was that Jesus hadn't eaten anything for 40 days and 40 nights. That's beyond our imagination to go without food for so long.

Most of us could probably give up a meal or two, but to give up eating all together for a period of 40 days, well, that's beyond our ability.

I'd like to point out that when Jesus came out of the 40 day fast, the gospel writer Matthew described Jesus' condition. He said that Jesus was "hungry," which I think was an understatement.

Well, when Jesus came out of the desert after having fasted 40 days and nights, the devil probably picked up on the fact that Jesus was starving.

The other two temptations the temptation with power/wealth or the temptation to test God, probably wasn't as tempting as the first one, because when you're hungry, that's all you can think about is putting something in your mouth!

But notice how Jesus responded in vs 4, Jesus said:

"It is written, 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

It's amazing first of all that Jesus responded the way He did with calm and composure. Those of you who come by the church during the week, if you're at the church anytime close to the lunch hour, than you know that if I don't sit down to eat by a certain hour, well, I sort of get cranky.

I don't know why I do and I can't explain it, but if I don't eat when it's time to eat, well, I'm just not myself! I get a little cranky, I get a little moody,

some people say I get grumpy, maybe it's low blood sugar, I don't know!

So, if you come by the church and if for some reason, I'm delayed in eating my lunch, the last thing I'm going to do if you ask me to do something, is to put on a big smile and quote a Bible verse for you!

But this is exactly what Jesus did when faced with the first temptation. Jesus hadn't had anything to eat for the past 40 days, understandably, Jesus had every excuse to be a grumpy as He wanted, but instead, when tempted to turn stones into something to eat, Jesus looked Satan in the eye and said

"It is written, 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

Take a closer look at the way Jesus responded. Jesus responded to the temptation by quoting a Bible verse at the devil. In fact, in each of the temptations, Jesus quoted from the book of Deuteronomy.

The 1st Bible quote was from Deut. 8:2-3 and what Moses said to the Israelites:

"Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that MAN DOES NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT COMES FROM THE MOUTH OF THE LORD."

The 2nd Bible quote in response to the 2nd temptation was from Deut. 6:16 again a quote from Moses to the people:

Do not test the Lord your God as you did at Massah."

and then the 3rd Bible quote in response to the 3rd temptation was from *Deut 6:13*, again, Moses

"Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name."

All three quotes were from the book of Deuteronomy, and were originally spoken by Moses to the Israelites during the Exodus.

What impresses me about the way that Jesus was able to quote these Bible verses, is that Jesus didn't have a "Bible" in His hand, at least not in the way the Bible exists today.

Back then, if you wanted to read a passage, you had to "unroll" these really long scrolls, so, it's not like Jesus unrolled the entire book of Deuteronomy and found these verses, which means Jesus knew them by memory!

Jesus also didn't have a smart phone that had a Bible app on it with 100's of diff translations. He also couldn't say something like: *"Alexa, what is a good bible verse to respond to temptation?"*

That fact that Jesus was able to quote these verses and recall them from memory, means that Jesus spent a lot of time feasting on the Word of God!

And then there's the part where before quoting each verse. Jesus said those three famous words: "It is Written!"

It is written, "Man does not live on bread alone"

It is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

It is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only."

That was Jesus' way of saying *"The Bible says....."* so and so.

Have you ever heard someone say something like:

The Bible says it, I believe it, and that settles it!"

Well, that's kind of like what Jesus was saying to the devil.

This week, my encouragement to you is to spend more time in God's word, so that when faced with temptation or when you're in a situation where you need God's wisdom, the words will come to you just as naturally they did for Jesus.

During this pandemic, a few churches have been having some fun with their marquee, or their church sign in front of their building.



Aren't these great signs?

Well, the clever part about these signs is that they make it sound like, these sayings are in the Bible, esp. the references to Hygenesis 20:20 or Hygenesis: 24:7

But you all know right that there is no such book in the Bible, and just in case you're trying to look up the passage, let me tell you - it's not in the Bible!

Bible quotes quiz

How well do you know what's in God's word? I'd like to show you a few quotes and then I'm going to ask you who in the Bible said those quotes.

Here's the first quote: "**God won't give us more than we can handle.**"
Which prophet said that quote? Was it Jonah, Isaiah, or Jeremiah?

*The answer is none of them said that quote
because that quote is NOT in the Bible!*

There's something related in 1 Cor 10 but not the direct quote I just read.

How about this quote: "**Everything happens for a reason.**"
Who said it? Was it Job? Was it Joseph? or was it Jesus?

*The answer is: none of them said that quote because
that quote also is NOT in the Bible.*

How about this one: "*God helps those who help themselves.*"
Which testament has that quote, the Old Testament or the New Testament?

*The answer is: none of them has that quote,
because that quote is NOT in the Bible!*

One last one: "*God wants me to be happy!*"
Was it Mary or Martha or Melchizedek who said that quote?

*You guessed it!
It was none of them!*

I hope you all answered correctly to each of those quotes. None of them are actually in the Bible, although they sound like they do, but if you had some trouble knowing if they were in the Bible or not, than this week,

my encouragement to you is less CNN or NBC and more NIV. Less Twitter, Instagram or Facebook and more of The Good Book!

Lent - spend more time in God's Word.

The season of Lent is a great time to spend more time in God's Word.

This past Wednesday at our Mid-week Lenten devotions, one of the participants shared how during a past Lenten observance, she memorized the entire 27th Psalm.

That's the one that starts off - "*The Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear?*"

She memorized not just a few verses from Ps. 27 but the whole entire chapter! As if that wasn't impressive enough, can I tell you how young she is? She is 96 years young!

*The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid?"*

That's her "go to" Bible verse (or Psalm). That's the verse she recites when faced with any kind of difficulty and that's the verse that she can recall and stand on the promises of God!

Do you remember a few years ago - we invited a group to our church to share their music with us? They were called Teen Challenge. I think we all enjoyed their music and the songs that they sang, but what I enjoyed even more was when one of them would come forward and share a personal testimony.

They would talk about how Jesus changed their lives and then at the end of each testimony, they would share a Bible verse and the way they said it was something like: "*The Bible verse I stand on is Jn 3:16*" or "*The Bible verse I stand on is Phil 4:13*"

And by saying it that way, they were sharing with us the Bible verse that was etched on their minds and written on their hearts or tattooed on their arms!

My encouragement to you this week and during the season of Lent is to find your "go to" verse and the verse you stand on!

Find that Bible passage that centers your soul.
Find that Bible verse that focuses your spirit on Christ!

Whether it's a Psalm, a Proverb or a quote from a Jesus, whether it was said by David, by Joseph, or Paul or Mary, whether it's from the NIV, or the Ancient King James or the more modern Message translation, find the Words of God that sheds light onto your path.

When Jesus was hungry and faced temptation, He quoted from the book of Deuteronomy and recalled the story of when God provided for His people.

I like to share two stories as I close.

The first story is about Sunny Cordromp, one of our church members who passed away a year ago. This coming Saturday will actually be the one year mark.

I remember visiting Sunny and spending time with her - sharing memories and stories. But as her illness progressed, the conversations became shorter and the stories too.

Towards the end, it got to the point where the conversations were "one way" - with me doing the talking, and her doing the listening.

Some days, I would visit and she would have trouble remembering who I was, and so I would have to tell her, "It's me Sunny, it's Pastor Billy!" and even then, sometimes, there was the look that she didn't know who I was.

Well, at the end of each visit we always did this thing, and that was - we would open up the blue hymnal and sing a few songs, and what always amazed me, was that Sunny remembered all the lines and sang the songs in harmony! If I sang the melody, she would sing the descant without looking at the notes. But even after some time, she had difficulty doing even that.

Then at the very end, we would close our eyes and say the Lord's Prayer together, and during the prayer - I would cheat and open my eyes to see if she was praying, and as I said the Lord's Prayer, her lips mirrored every word!

The Word of God was deeply embedded in Sunny's spiritual memory. Even if she didn't know any longer who I was or the songs from the hymnal, the Word of the Lord - remained.

The other story is about a woman named Mary Jones.

Here's a picture of Mary Jones, and as you can tell - it was taken a long time ago. Mary lived back in the late 1700's and grew up in the country of Wales, and back then Bibles were scarce to begin with, and in her region, not too many people could read.



But as a little girl, Mary loved going to church and hear the stories that the pastor read from the Bible. She didn't have her own bible and the family didn't have one either - both her parents couldn't read, so there was very little motivation.

So at the young age of 10 years old, young Mary was determined to buy her own Bible, which meant she first had to go to school and learn how to read - the nearest school was 2 miles away which she started.

Then, in order to save up money, Mary offered to do chores around the neighborhood - washing people's laundry. She also raised chickens and sold off the eggs and after 6 long years, she finally saved up enough money, to go and buy a Bible!



Well, the only thing was, the nearest Bible she could buy was over 25 miles away, and so with her parent's permission Mary all of 16 years old walked 25 miles one way bare feet so as not to wear down her shoes,

but when she got to the church, and found out that the one bible for sale was already promised to someone else, she explained to the pastor that she had word for the past 6 years and even learned how to read, just so that she could buy that Bible!

Moved by her story, the pastor sold that bible to Mary. Then a few years later at a religious conference, that pastor told the story of Mary, which inspired the starting of the Bible Society, who's purpose is to make Bibles available to everyone - free of cost.

I pray that this week and going into the 2nd week of Lent, that you would rediscover the joy of spending time in God's Word - that the Words would take root in your hearts and be firmly established in your lives, and may they be WRITTEN in all that you do!