

Remnant Life Church  
June 9, 2024  
**Temptation: Avoiding the Easy Way**  
Luke 4:1-11

- I had not intended to turn this into a multiple-Sunday series, but God often has other plans
  - We have looked at how to identify false doctrine and teaching.
  - We have examined how the truth of God’s Word transforms us into a new person.
  - Last week, it was dealing with the ongoing plan of satan for every Christian - temptation

This morning, with temptation still the focus, I want us to look at how to avoid dealing with temptation the easy way – because that never works.

**READ – Luke 4:1-11**

This familiar story of Jesus that we read last week shows how Jesus handled temptation and reveals the most common areas that satan attacks

- We recognize again that temptation is not a sin
  - If Jesus was tempted and had to deal with it then it could be sin in and of itself
  - Temptation only becomes sin when we act on it
- But we must be wise regarding how we deal with it and understanding the plans and schemes of satan is the best way to do that
  - Jesus endures three separate temptations all aimed at trying to deceive or trick Jesus
  - Two of the three temptations begin the same way, “If you are the Son of God...”
    - Satan wanted first to sow doubt into Jesus’ mind
    - And this was right on the heels of Jesus’ baptism when God said, *You are my Son whom I love; with you I am well pleased.* (Luke 3:22)

1. Change the stones to bread (Luke 4:3)

- a. Satan is suggesting to Jesus that if He does not eat anything, He will die
  - i. Satan is still promoting that same idea today of making taking care of yourself first the highest priority
  - ii. Take care of #1; You had better look out for yourself because no one else will
  - iii. This not only sows and increases pride but also undermines our trust in God that He can and will care for us
- b. But like all temptations, at first glance, this temptation seems like a good idea
  - i. Not only was Jesus hungry, but He could then feed the world
- c. To feed the masses of that time would be to entice and convince them to follow Him
  - i. Look at the peoples’ response to Jesus at the feeding of the 5000
  - ii. **John 6:14-15** - *After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.” Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.*

- d. Jesus was being tempted to give the people what they wanted instead of what they needed
    - i. IOW it was to meet the most basic desire – to be physically satisfied
    - ii. But physical food does not last; you get hungry again
    - iii. The plans of satan are never for your good or long-term benefit
  - e. Jesus knew that it was not physical but spiritual food that people needed
  - f. Not food that would satisfy for a short time and then need to be replenished over and over, but food that lasted for an eternity
  - g. The other thing satan was trying to do was to get Jesus to use His power and anointing to serve His own interests
    - i. Anyone who is promoting themselves or focusing on their own well-being is not serving the Kingdom – no matter how it may appear
2. If Jesus worshiped satan he would give Jesus all authority over the earthly kingdoms (Luke 4:6)
- a. I think this one is funny
    - i. First, satan is trying to give away something that is not his to give
      - 1. God never relinquished anything to satan
      - 2. God is still God over all His creation
    - ii. Second, he is offering a position to Jesus that He already has, ruler over all
  - b. satan is attempting to offer Jesus control over all the then and current ruling factions of the world
    - i. Governmental
    - ii. Military
    - iii. Economic
    - iv. Social
  - c. In other words, satan is trying to get Jesus to believe that all He had to do was acknowledge satan as ruler of the world, and then Jesus would be able to change the entire world's way of living
    - i. He could accomplish His mission, His goal
    - ii. He would be successful
  - d. But another plan was already in place – a godly plan
    - i. Jesus knew He did not need satan's plans
    - ii. He knew that He would be crucified, would die, and would be buried
    - iii. He also knew that His Father would raise Him from the dead to conquer satan, and hell, and satan's greatest threat to His creation – death
  - e. Jesus did not need to alter the plans that His Father had put in place before the creation of the universe
    - i. To do that would have meant that Jesus would cut some corners
    - ii. But don't we hear today that the ends always justify the means?
    - iii. It's okay to do things the way you see fit if it gets you where you want to go
      - 1. Well, it is worshipping the devil to ignore the moral and ethical absolutes of God in order to succeed in the eyes of the world
      - 2. It is worshipping the devil when we think and act as if the rules do not apply to us

- iv. Jesus knew that He would stay the course even when an easier option was put before Him
3. The third temptation - Jump off the peak of the temple so that God will save you (Luke 4:9)
- a. This one is different than the other 2
    - i. Jesus did not have to compromise who He was like in the other two
    - ii. All He had to do was to call on His Father
    - iii. And to do so would have guaranteed His place as the people's Messiah
      - 1. The temple was located in Jerusalem
      - 2. To leap for the highest point would have been a fall of over 400 feet into the Kidron Valley
      - 3. If Jesus had landed on the ground, unhurt, all those people who would have witnessed it would have been dazzled and amazed
      - 4. His fame would spread to every corner of the land
  - b. But if He had, it would have shown that God could be manipulated by Satan and, in the same way, by us
    - i. It would, in effect, put us in control of God
    - ii. That certainly would have appealed to many, including Christians today
      - 1. But it would turn God into our heavenly vending machine who would give us what we want when we put in the coin and pull the lever
      - 2. It would always be taking the easy way out by just letting God take care of everything we wanted and needed.
      - 3. And it would turn prayer into a cheap currency
  - c. This was the craftiest of all the temptations and the most dangerous
    - i. Why? Because it is the most subtle
    - ii. Again, this was not so bad on the surface, but it would have been the most damning
    - iii. It was geared to replace God's will with our own
    - iv. It would have placed within our hearts and minds, "God will do this, if I do that"
    - v. And if that is the case, to take it one step further, the cross would not have been necessary if it was left up to us to gain our salvation through our own actions
      - 1. But the apostle Paul addresses this directly
      - 2. **Eph 2:8-9** - *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*
    - vi. Salvation is not a reward for what we do - it is a gift that we can in no way merit or deserve

In each of these three attempts, Jesus was being tempted to take the easy way out

- What if Jesus had taken the easy way out?
  - a. There was a book written in 1960 called *The Last Temptation of Christ* that attempted to answer that same question

- i. Greek author Nikos Kazantzakis
    - ii. Later adapted into a very controversial, very bad movie
  - b. In the story, Jesus imagines what life would have been like had he chosen another way. In a dream-like state, Jesus gets married, fathers many children, enjoys the company of friends and works as a kindly carpenter until he is a white-bearded old man. The dream then begins to change as Jesus is confronted by his disciples. They, too, are now old men.  
Long ago, they had given up the fight of their mission, and their destiny had shriveled into meaningless. And in their company was a very angry, very alive Judas who bellowed to the uncrucified Jesus: "You are a traitor! A deserter! Your place was on the cross! That is where the God of Israel put you to fight. But you lost your nerve, and the moment death lifted its head, you couldn't get away fast enough." The rest of the disciples then joined in the confrontation. His life had been wasted, for he had given in to temptation and avoided the cross. He chose an easier way, and it proved to be the way of failure. The end of that scene then sees Jesus waking from His dream to find Himself, in fact, on the cross.
  - c. Of course, we know full well that Jesus did not take the easy way
    - i. Instead, he watched as each and every one of those who were closest to Him fled and deserted Him
    - ii. He endured the incredible physical pain and torture
    - iii. He took the weight of the sins of the world on Himself
    - iv. He suffered the indescribable agony of having His Heavenly Father turn His face away from Him
  - d. And He did all of this for you and for me

How often are you tempted to take the easy way out?

- Just give in to your anger, your greed, your selfishness
- Give in to what you know in your heart and mind is not right

Our sinful nature tells us that the easy way is the best way

- And many have fallen into the trap of that lie
  - **Matt 7:13-14** - *Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*
    - That narrow road calls for us to govern our emotions when wronged so that we reflect His love
    - It is a road where we follow Him instead of ourselves
    - A road that demands we sacrifice our time, our energy, and our will, to Him
    - It is a hard road but it leads to a life fulfilled by the purposes of God for your life
- So, what will you do the next time you are tempted to take the easy way?
  - **I Cor 10:13** - *No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.*