

Whose Are We?

Matthew 4:1-11

C.S. Lewis wrote *The Screwtape Letters*: “A Senior Devil Instructs a Junior Devil in the Art of Temptation.” In one letter, Screwtape advises a junior co-worker to focus on one human frailty.

The sense of ownership in general is always to be encouraged. Humans are always putting up claims to ownership which sound equally funny in Heaven and in Hell, and we must keep them doing so. . . not only by pride but by confusion.

Ownership, or belonging, is the key tension in the three wilderness temptations of Jesus. The first two are framed in a game of “prove it:” *if you are the son of God, then...* In one case, the test involves an immediate satiation of hunger. Lest we forget, Matthew already indicated that Jesus had fasted forty days. The hunger would be real. But Jesus grounds who he is, even in his hunger, in the One to whom he belongs. Bread alone does not suffice, but word and thus connection with God. The second case tests that very connection by attempting to force God’s hand. The tempter even quotes scripture to qualify the proposed stunt. But again, Jesus grounds himself in trust of God, a sense of belonging that does not require tricks or high dives to prove.

The third testing of Jesus takes the form of a shortcut. No longer does the tempter dangle “if you are the son of God.” Rather, what is offered is a quick detour around Jerusalem and cross to dominion and honor. *All that is needed to save yourself time and frustration and pain, Jesus, is just a quick bend of the knee, a bit of genuflection, a word of worship, and this is all yours. That result is, after all, what I hear this coming of God’s realm envisions. So why not get it now?* And that is the problem. The ends do not justify the means to obtain them. Even in the wilderness, as the tempter sorely misunderstands, who Jesus is and will be is secondary to *whose* Jesus is.

Whose we are is not only Jesus’ guide in the wilderness. *Whose we are* intends to guide us today. The Heidelberg Catechism from the Reformed tradition puts it this way in its opening question:

What is your only comfort, in life and in death?

That I belong -- body and soul, in life and in death --

Not to myself but to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

I belong, we belong, to God in Christ. That is *whose we are* as persons and communities of faith.

For Reflection and Action:

Consider key times in your life when you felt a sense of belonging: what conveyed that sense?

What kinds of “testings” have come to such belonging, especially those related to faith?

What might a newcomer to Our Saviour’s see as evidence of “whose we are.”