



MINISTRIES

Sermon for Sunday,

February 22nd, 2026

Text: Matthew 4:1-11

Recorded by Bob & Tammy Springer

Let us Pray: Lord, You have given us a covering for sin and protection from the evil one through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Help us to press into You for the strength and courage to stand against temptation so as to live a life that is pleasing and honoring to You. Now, guide my words and guard my tongue, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Temptation is nothing new—it has been part of human life for as long as we can remember. But in today's fast-paced, hyper-connected world, the nature of temptation has evolved. With technology, social media, materialism, and shifting moral values, resisting temptation has become more challenging than ever. **If Jesus were walking among us today, how would He respond to the modern world's greatest temptations?**

The first Sunday of Lent is traditionally a time when believers in Christ outwardly practice the disciplines of prayer and fasting that date back to Biblical times. Particularly to a 40-day period of time for fasting and prayer.

Fast-forward to today, when the practice of abstaining from certain types of food and worldly pleasures in many ways has lost its spiritual significance. Its value is seen mostly in its health benefits.

Fasting and prayer is important when it is done for the right reasons and in the right way, not as a way to show oneself to God or others as being **outwardly spiritual**, but as a way of conforming one's life more closely to the life of Christ.

Prayer and fasting is not a hunger strike to get from God what we want, but **a way for us to draw closer to God to get what He wants: our devotion.** Not for self-indulgence, but **to increase our awareness of God.**

Last week we learned of the Transfiguration of Christ, up on the mountain top. **Today our Gospel reading takes us to the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness, all alone in the valley below the mountain.**

On the mountaintop there is not a care or worry in the world. You'll remember it was on the mountain top Peter wanted to build three tabernacles to try to hold onto their great experience. But Jesus knew that it was in the valley below where their faith would be put to the test.

As the saying goes, "*What goes up must come down.*" From above, on the mountain top, God gives us a birds-eye view or perspective on the trials and tribulations we face in the valley below so when we return to them we will be better able to handle them.

The wilderness that "Jesus was led to by the Spirit" (Matthew 4:1) **is where our faith is tried and tested. It is where we discover those areas of our lives where we think we are strong but that the devil is able to find our weaknesses.**

Make no mistake, if Jesus was tempted, we can be certain we will be tempted, too. Tempted to compromise, take shortcuts, even twist the truth when it comes to choosing God's ways over our own.

What is temptation? It is simply being invited to do something God's Word clearly tells us not to do. Temptation is inviting us to choose the wrong way over the way God would have us go. Since God cannot be tempted by evil, where does temptation come from? It comes when we give in to our fleshly desires. So, we cannot use the age-old excuse, "*The devil [or even God] made me do it!*" When it comes to temptation, what is our first response? **Do we tend to run from sin or run to it?**

All around us there are temptations in this world. Advertising is a good example of temptation. **Advertisements tempt us to indulge ourselves.** More is better! The sign in restaurants at this time of year may advertise their “Lenten special:” SEAFOOD BUFFET – ALL YOU CAN EAT! So much for self-discipline and self-denial!!

The **first temptation** we read about in the Bible occurred way back in the book of Genesis when Adam and Eve were both tempted by the crafty serpent satan **to eat of the forbidden fruit.** Ever since then, satan has tempted us in one form or another with these words: “*Did God REALLY say you should not eat from any tree in the garden?*” (Genesis 2:17) Even today, he still puts that thought in our minds, “*Does God’s word REALLY mean/say that you should not do..... Whatever it is you want to do?*” **Satan plants self-doubt and distrust of God in our hearts and minds.**

We need to correct a common misunderstanding many Christians have when it comes to temptation: Temptation in itself is not a sin. Everyone of us are daily surrounded by temptation. **It is the YIELDING or GIVING IN to the temptation that is a sin.**

The devil tempted Eve when he caused her to question what God said, “*Thou shall not!*” The reason our world is in the mess it’s in is because in our flesh we are looking for a way or an excuse to do what WE want, rather than what God’s Word says.

The biggest lie of the devil is to try to get us to compromise our beliefs and convictions. To get us to think that temptation to sin is no big deal. After all, it’s part of our human nature, right?! Everybody sins....nobody’s perfect.....but **just because everyone does it doesn’t make it right with God!!**

We need to heed God’s Word when it says, “*....resist the devil and he will flee; draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*” (James 4:7-8)

The apostle Paul writes, “*....there is no temptation such as is common to man where God is not faithful to deliver us. For He will give you a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*”(I Corinthians 10:!3)

That way of escape for us is Jesus Christ. Spending time in His Word and in prayer will help keep our eyes on Him and not on Satan's efforts to distract us. **Have you ever wondered what our lives would be like if Jesus had not won the battle over temptation in the wilderness?** If it were not for Jesus' example, we all would be hopelessly lost. ".....*Just as sin came into the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, so by one man [Jesus] came our victory over temptation and sin.*" (Romans 5:12)

Jesus' temptation in the wilderness took on three distinct forms:

The **first temptation** was to turn stones into bread. Satan wanted Jesus to substitute one thing for another.

In the **second temptation**, Satan wanted Jesus to throw Himself off the temple mount to get around having to die on the cross. This temptation was to take shortcuts.

The **third temptation** was to worship and serve the creation rather than the creator.

In each instance, Jesus said, "*Away with you, Satan, for IT IS WRITTEN....*" **In each and every temptation Jesus goes back to Scripture, to God's unchanging Word to do God's will. "It is written.....It is written.....It is written."** Each time Jesus reminded the devil what was written in the Holy Scriptures. The portions of Scripture Jesus fed His soul on were probably in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy since these were the ones He quoted to the devil.

Each time the devil tried to deceive Jesus, our Lord takes the devil back to what God's Word says. Make no mistake about it, the devil is a master deceiver and will do anything to try to lure us away from God's Word and will. He tempted Adam and Eve in the beginning of Creation, and his agenda has not changed today. If the devil can get us to question in our mind what God's Word says, he can cause us to doubt and turn away from God – to believe a lie rather than the truth. If the devil can get us to pick the Bible apart, as many are doing today, saying it is full of errors and contradictions, he can get us to believe just about anything.

Perhaps the **number one issue today** at the core of all divisions between churches is that **many no longer believe the Word of God is infallible or of divine inspiration**. Too many have been deceived into thinking men were REALLY NOT moved by the Holy Spirit to write down the Words of God for our instruction. Sadly, many today have walked away from the belief that the Bible is God's inspired, authoritative WORD on ALL matter of faith and practice.

When it came to the Bible, **Jesus did NOT debate with the devil. He only declared the Word of God to be TRUE. "IT IS WRITTEN," Jesus said.** The devil knows he is no match for Jesus and the Word of God, and he is no match for the Christian who takes God at His Word, either.

Can we do any less today if we truly want to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness?? Someone once said, "*When the devil comes knocking at your door, don't invite him in. Instead, ask Jesus to answer it.*"

The battle we face in resisting temptation, in doing God's will and not our own, **is an ongoing one**. It is a battle between our flesh and the Spirit, between our old nature and our new nature in Christ Jesus.

But we do not give in or give up. We press on, toward to upward calling of Christ Jesus. We continue to press into Him through prayer, reading His Word, and worshipping with other believers. **We can expect when we do these things our temptations may increase**. After all, satan doesn't give up easily. He will try to distract and divert us from doing all the things God wants us to do. **But know this: the abundance of God's grace will be given to us. His inner strength will be made perfect in our weakness.**

Just remember: When you face temptations (and we will!), just remember, "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:14)

As Pastor Bob says, "**God said it, I believe it, and that settles it!**"

Amen.

