

February 23, 2025 Morning Worship (Communion Service)

“Obey the Word and receive the victory of the Lord.”

Luke 4:1-13

by Pastor Chong Himchang

Scripture: Luke 4:1-13

¹ Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

² where for forty days he was tempted^[a] by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

³ The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”

⁴ Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’”

⁵ The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.

⁶ And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.

⁷ If you worship me, it will all be yours.”

⁸ Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”

⁹ The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here.

¹⁰ For it is written:

**“He will command his angels concerning you
to guard you carefully;**

**¹¹ they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”**

¹² Jesus answered, “It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

¹³ When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

If we look at verse 1, we see that Jesus in this wilderness was led by the Spirit to be tried by the devil. This seems a bit odd. Why would the Spirit of God lead Jesus into the devil's trial? The context of the preceding and following verses makes it clear, but the conclusion is that it was because Jesus, born as a man, was the Son of God. If we look at the preceding verses of today's passage, in chapter 3:21-22, we read about the time when Jesus was baptized, and in verse 22, we read that there was a voice from heaven saying, “You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” God said that Jesus is my Son. This is a declaration that Jesus is the Son of God. From verse 23 to verse 38, which immediately precedes today's passage, we find a genealogical record of Jesus' birth. However, unlike the genealogy in Matthew 1, which is written in chronological order, this genealogy in Luke is written in reverse order, that is, from Jesus back to his ancestors.

And as we continue with today's wilderness trial, the devil also knew that "Jesus is the Son of God" and tried him. This is clearly evident in the three times the devil tries Jesus in today's passage. In them, twice in verses 3 and 9 devil tried Jesus with the words, "If you are the Son of God." The devil tried Jesus because He is the Son of God. Because Jesus, as the Son of God, had a mission to fulfill the plan of salvation given to him by God on earth. In order to prevent this, the devil tried Jesus, the Son of God, who was at the same time a weak man. The devil tried to frustrate Jesus' work as the Savior, but it was actually under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the Lord Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and triumphed over the temptation.

There is one more thing to consider, and that is our own reading of this passage. As we read this passage, we may wonder how I can overcome the devil's attempts to tempt me. I would like to touch on this later, but the important premise is that we have all been defeated in this attempt. And we lost at the time of the first man. We lost in the Garden of Eden when Adam disobeyed the Word of God and ate the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. But because of this, Jesus, who came as the Savior, was led by the Spirit and underwent a trial in the wilderness.

■The First Temptation

Let us look at verses 2-4.

² where for forty days he was tempted^[a] by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. ³ The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

It is written that Jesus ate nothing for 40 days, and He felt hungry. Through His hunger, we can know that He faced this trial as the Son of God, but also as a human being like us. The devil knew this. Therefore, he tried by saying "Command this stone to become bread." But Jesus rejected the devil's temptation, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"

As Jesus said, "It is written," He answered by quoting the words of the Bible. The words Jesus quoted were from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy 8:3. In order to understand Jesus' intention in quoting the words of Deuteronomy, it is necessary to check the background of Deuteronomy 8. Let us read Deuteronomy 8:2-6. These are the words that Moses spoke to the Israelites as they entered Canaan.

² Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. ³ He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors 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. ⁴ Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. ⁵ Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you. ⁶ Observe the commands of the Lord your God, walking in obedience to him and revering him.

The Israelites, led by Moses, fled Egypt and wandered for 40 years in the wilderness. Why did they have to go through such an experience? It was because they disobeyed God and did not believe in Him. Even after experiencing God's great work of deliverance from Egypt, they still did not trust God and continued to complain that they had no bread, no water, that they were going to be killed, and that they would have been better off in Egypt. The Israelites were continually plagued by unbelief in the bread. So God sent them on a 40-year journey in the wilderness and fed them in a way they had never thought possible. It was manna. As they harvested the manna each morning, the Israelites experienced that God was indeed alive, and that He would take care of them as He had promised. Israel ate manna, the very fruit of the Lord's word of promise.

If God had kept Israel alive in the wilderness, a place where they had absolutely nothing to rely on, shouldn't He be able to provide for His people no matter where they are or what their circumstances are? Therefore, we are told to believe in God and follow Him. That is what the Israelites were to learn during their 40 years in the wilderness. But the exodus generation succumbed to the bread test and perished in the wilderness. Jesus knew why the people perished in the wilderness. They did not die because they had nothing to eat. They died because they did not believe and obey God. In fact, what the Israelites lacked was not food, but faith and obedience to God. Eating and living are not the highest priorities. Bread is necessary for people. Therefore, the Word says, "Not bread alone". But the highest priority is not eating, but God, who controls and provides even a person's eating. Therefore, Jesus said, "Man does not live by bread alone" in response to the bread trial.

(As a corollary, in the parallel Gospel of Matthew, Jesus' response is quoted at greater length than in Luke's Gospel. ("It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4).

While Matthew emphasizes that the Word of God makes people live, Luke's Gospel says, "Man does not live by bread alone" and focuses on God, who controls and provides even a person's food, rather than eating, as the most important priority.

The devil also tempts Jesus in this trial to use his power as the Son of God for his own good. He says, "Are you not the Son of God? Does it make sense for you to be hungry like this? There is no need to wait for God to work. You can change these stones and make bread. Do so." But Jesus did not use His power as the Son of God for Himself. Jesus had the power to meet His own needs without God's supply. But Jesus firmly refused the temptation. Not because he could not, but because he did not want to. What Jesus wanted was to obey God's Word. He put God first, accomplished God's will, and lived on earth according to what God had given him.

■The Second Temptation

⁵ The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.

⁶ And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.

⁷ If you worship me, it will all be yours."

Now the devil took Jesus to a high place and in a moment showed him all the nations of the world and said, I will give you all this, the power and glory of the nations. He tempted him by showing him directly what he could actually see. To give you all the power and glory of the nations means to give you the right to rule over them all, to make you king.

Since Old Testament times, it has been prophesied that the Messiah would come to save the world and establish an eternal kingdom. Jesus' coming was for that eternal kingdom, the Kingdom of God. The devil is talking to us about this. He is saying, "You don't have to suffer on this earth, just bow to me and I will give you all dominion. The devil is presenting a very simple path. The path presented by the devil does not require struggling with ignorant disciples, it does not require being betrayed by people, and it does not require the suffering of the cross. It does not require taking on all the sins of the world and incurring the wrath of the Father. He is saying that He can skip all this painful process and immediately sit on the throne of glory. All He has to do is bow to the devil. But this is not just a question of getting the reigns. It is a question of who you obey. The devil is telling Him to use a different way, an easier way that he has taught Him, that is not God's way of getting what God has promised.

One word I would like to focus on here is the devil's statement in the second half of verse 6, "It is up to me, and I will give it to whomever I wish." Does the devil really have the power and glory of the nations entrusted to him? The devil's words are partially true. The devil has authority on earth. For example, three times in John's Gospel, Jesus refers to the devil as "the ruler of the world". In verse 6, the devil says, "It is committed to me," and the word "committed" is the original word "paradidomi," which means to hand something over to someone else. In other words, the devil was handed this from someone else, or to put it bluntly, he took it from them. In the past, Adam was entrusted by God to rule the earth, but because he obeyed the devil's words instead of God's, it ended up in the devil's hands. However, the devil does not have absolute sovereignty. This was allowed temporarily under God's absolute sovereignty. But in order to keep it to himself, the devil is now trying to bring even the Son of God to his knees. Thus, when we look at the devil's true intentions, we see his horrifyingly high desire to become a god himself. Jesus saw through this and firmly rejected it.

⁸ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

This is another quote from Deuteronomy 6:13. Let's look at Deuteronomy 6:13-15.

¹³ Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name.

¹⁴ Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you;

¹⁵ for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land.

Worshiping God alone and not following other gods is clearly God's will. Therefore, Jesus clarified who should be worshipped by saying, "Worship the Lord," and He further said, "Serve the Lord alone," emphasizing that God alone is the object of worship. He knew that to bow down to anyone but God to get what one wants is not an easy path, but the path of destruction. The Israelites in the wilderness also chose the easy way to get what they wanted, not the way God showed them, but the way that seemed good to them, and they bowed down to another god who was not God. Therefore, they caused God's envy and were destroyed by the Lord's wrath.

What Jesus wanted was to worship God by living according to God's Word and to serve only God by following the way God showed us, not our own way. God's plan for salvation was for the Savior to go through suffering to be glorified, as foretold in the suffering servant through the prophet Isaiah. This meant that He would have to deny Himself and take up His cross. But this method that Jesus followed was the only way to free men enslaved to the devil and make them children of God.

■Third Temptation

⁹ The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here.

¹⁰ For it is written:

“He will command his angels concerning you
to guard you carefully;

¹¹ they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”

¹² Jesus answered, “It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

The devil took Jesus to Jerusalem and had him stand at the edge of the temple roof. The reason the devil took Jesus to the Jerusalem temple is because this Jerusalem temple is a place of God's presence and protection. He wanted him to jump down there and test whether God would protect him. And the devil, seeing that Jesus answered with the Word in the two previous trials, now uses the Word himself. The devil used Psalm 91:11-12, which says that God protects those who rely on Him and sheltered themselves in Him. The devil used this verse to challenge Jesus, saying that if you are the Son of God, you should have God's protection. However, Jesus rejected the devil's challenge based on the words of Deuteronomy 6:16, “Do not test the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 6:16

¹⁶ Do not put the Lord your God to the test as you did at Massah.

These words remind us of the time when the Israelites fought against the Lord and tested Him in the wilderness in the land of Massah, and they admonish us not to do such a thing again. Jesus saw a connection between the devil's attempt to get the Israelites to jump off the mountain and what the Israelites did at Massa.

The Israelites' attempt to test God in the land of Massa is described in Exodus 17:1-7. Although we will not read it due to time constraints, we are told that at this time the people tested Him in the wilderness, saying, “Is the Lord in our midst or not?” because they ran out of water. In other words, the Israelites said that God might not be present when what they sought was not given to them in their own timing. There is a motive here to have God move within the framework that one has set for oneself. The same is true of the devil's attempts. When a person says, “God, You promised me in Your Word that You would protect me even if I jumped off this temple?” and jumps off, he appears to believe in God, but in fact he is trying to use God as he sees fit. Therefore, Jesus said, “Do not test the Lord your God.”

Rather, Jesus chose to submit himself to God's sovereignty and yield himself to God in his decisions.

¹³ When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

The devil's attempts failed and Jesus was victorious in this attempt. The devil then left Jesus. However, as it says that the devil left for a while, it is implied that the devil would continue to hinder Jesus' work after that.

As I said earlier, this trial of the devil is also described in the fourth chapter of Matthew's Gospel. There is a major difference between Matthew and Luke. The order of the trials is different. In Matthew, the first temptation to turn stones into bread, the second temptation to confirm God's protection by jumping down from the temple, and the third temptation to give the nations are described in that order, while in Luke, the temptation to confirm God's protection by jumping down from the Jerusalem temple comes last. When we consider the reason for this order in Luke, it may be because Luke has something to tell us by putting the trial in Jerusalem at the end.

After this trial in the wilderness, the activity of the devil, who had been away from Jesus for some time, will culminate again later in the day, here in Jerusalem. This is the Passion in which Jesus died on the cross. It was not God's protection that was offered to Jesus in Jerusalem at this time. It was God's wrath, His death as punishment for sin. If the devil's interpretation of the Bible is correct, Jesus should have been protected from death. But God did not. God's will was for Jesus to die as a substitute for man's sins. When Jesus was praying in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane before His death on the cross, God sent His angel to strengthen Him. He gave Jesus help so that He could go the way of the cross.

At the beginning of the sermon, I said that man had already lost to the devil's trial. So is this Word not directly relevant to us? Jesus had defeated all the devil's attempts, obeyed God's will even unto death, and resurrected to complete the work of salvation. Therefore, the devil's defeat has already been decided. Therefore, the devil, realizing his own destruction, is now making his last desperate attempt to take as many people as possible with him so that they will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Who is the target of this? It is each and every one of us who are trying to follow the Lord. We must learn from the Word of God today to confront the devil's schemes.

First, there is a trial for those who follow God. Is it a good thing that there is no trial? The devil's goal is to separate people from God. Therefore, if there is no trial at all, it could mean that there is a distance between us and God that the devil cannot deal with us. Jesus also

went through tribulation and was glorified. And God's help is to give us the strength to follow Him even in the midst of trials.

The second is how to face trials. The Word we read today tells us how Jesus faced trials. Jesus fought the devil with the written Word. This does not mean that we cast out demons by chanting the written Word as if it were an incantation. We fight the devil by obeying the written Word. James 4:7 also says, "Obey God and fight against the devil, and he will fight against you. Obey God and resist the devil, and he will flee from you. This is the same verse in James 4:7. **"Submit yourselves, then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."** Obey God and oppose the devil. Do not resist the devil in your own strength. Then you will lose. We should not try to fight by ourselves. By obeying God, we let God to fight. In other words, we receive God's victory by obeying His Word.

The devil tries us at all times and in various ways. The important thing for us is not to believe in ourselves. Don't believe in yourself, believe in God, and ask God for help. God has already given us weapons to fight with. Let us take the sword of the Word in our hands.

Prayer