

# **“The Devil. Evil. And The Ultimate Weapon To Defeat Them”**

Lent 1

1)

Luke 4:1-13

2)

March 10, 2019

May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance. 2 Thessalonians 3:5

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Intro – NCAA March Madness

The basketball coach practices plays with his team all throughout the year. Why? So when the time comes, the team will have the ability to fall back on that play and execute it in the moment when the team needs it most. Your team is down by one, and you have to get the ball down the full length of the court – 94 feet – and you have exactly 2.1 seconds to do it. In one of the greatest NCAA tournament buzzer beaters of all time, Grant Hill passes to Christian Laettner – who catches the ball near the free throw line. Laettner takes one dribble right, pivots and puts it up as time expires. Duke wins by one and goes on to win the tournament. The coach told them in the huddle – you’re going to make this. And all the players could think about is – now it’s time to execute. And they did. They executed what they practiced. When the time came and they were faced with a stiff test, they got it done.

Basketball is just a game. But there are a lot of things we can relate to our gospel lesson this morning. Spiritually speaking, our faith is so much more than a game. But it is a win or lose proposition. What did Jesus do when he faced a test and stiff competition? He executed. He ran the perfect play. He used the ultimate weapon to defeat the enemy – his and ours. This morning, we want to think about – **“The Devil. Evil. And The Ultimate Weapon To Defeat Them.”** We’ll look at – The depth and complexities of evil; The strategies of evil; and the ultimate weapon to defeat them – Scripture.

Is the devil real? In 2009 Barna research group asked ~2,000 Christians – “Satan is not a living being but is a symbol of evil.” 40% strongly agreed and 19% said they agreed somewhat. Friends, that is 59% of Christians who do not believe in the existence of the devil.

How does the devil work? In his tempting of Jesus in the wilderness, he doesn't say – "you will obey me." No, he uses psychological and physical factors. He uses hunger. **"Turn this stone into bread."** Jesus came into the world to be king, and the devil used it against him.

Throughout the Bible we see the devil and evil go hand in hand –

- Luke 22:3 – **"Satan entered into Judas."** Judas' envy and resentment were used against him.
- Eph 4:27 – **"Don't let the sun go down on your anger. Don't give the devil a foothold."**
  - Evil here is portrayed as anger used by the devil as "gaining a foothold" over you – and perhaps getting you to do things you wouldn't want to do.

You have several factors that are working against you –

- The world – you're sinned against – by all sorts of individuals
- Sinful Flesh – you also have a self-centeredness
- The devil – the one who's there orchestrating it all

Let's look again at the temptations. What do they have in common? They all are good things that are being held up to Jesus – 1. Bread – hunger; the devil said – 2. "I can give you all the kingdoms of this world" and, 3. throw yourself down – angels – I want the world to see how God bears you up and will save you. None of these are bad things. But if Jesus would have listened to the devil, he would have to disobey God to get those things. Jesus never used power for himself. The devil was trying to get Jesus the kingdoms of the world without going to the cross. And, here, the devil is saying – I want you to show the world how great you are. What the devil is trying to do is knock Jesus off his mission.

All of this is a temptation to sin against the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment – any good thing that becomes more important than God – your children, spouse, career. These are all good things and

blessings from God. But if any of these things more important than God is going to ruin your life.

The two main weapons that the devil uses are temptation and accusation.

Temptation – <sup>2</sup>...**for forty days he was tempted by the devil...** that means – to “put pressure on” somebody...to try to break them. Temptation is an enticement to do something wrong. Generally, it works through over confidence. For example, the devil tempts you by saying – “everything will be ok. Just do it. No one will know. God will still accept you.”

Accusation – Satan comes to you and tells you – what a failure you are; look what you’ve done; that you’re awful and to doubt God’s love for you. On your way into sin, the devil is saying – don’t worry, don’t worry, God will forgive you. Once you’ve committed the sin – he says, “Look at what you’ve done. And you call yourself a Christian.”

The devil uses both temptation and accusation. And he did this to Jesus. On the one hand – he’s saying, “Don’t you want this...**I can make you king**. On the other hand – he says “If you’re the Son of God.” What he’s saying is – “Are you sure God really loves you?”

So, what are we going to do about this? We need to use the ultimate weapon to defeat them – Scripture.

Did you notice how Jesus quotes Scripture every time he’s tempted by the devil – Deut 8, Deut 6 and Deut 6. And it’s always something that he’s ready to do at a time of crisis. It’s not just here in the wilderness. He’s even doing this from the cross. He’s quoting Scripture as he says – **My God, my God why have you forsaken me.** (Ps 22)

This is who Jesus is. He’s read, practiced, lived and breathed Scripture throughout his life.

v 8 – <sup>8</sup>**Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”** The devil tries to get you to put things ahead of God. B/c the only way he can hurt you is if he can get into your heart – through false beliefs and lies. So, the thing that you need to have as a deep belief inside your heart is your true identity.

The devil will try to hurt you with his lies – about your appearance, your success, if your children are accomplished. The #1 lie is this – that you can save yourself – that you can prove yourself.

Is Jesus your example? Or your Savior? If Jesus is only your example, you'll be insecure and afraid – b/c you'll believe the lie. And you'll always fall short of the perfection that God demands. You'll be believing the lie – “I'll only be loveable, significant, secure or accomplished.” The thing the devil tried to do – and made every effort – was to get Jesus not to go to the cross.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was facing another test. He was there, praying, “Your will be done.” The devil did not want Jesus to go to the cross, b/c he knew that there – in the cross – is the end of your temptation. B/c when you look to the cross, you see your sin and how serious it was. And you see your Savior paying for it...for every temptation that you've fallen into, and every lie of the devil you've ever believed.

Every time you look to the cross you see a Savior who loves you – no matter what you've done or how often you mess it up. In the cross you see and hear the good news of the gospel – **Rom 8:1 – There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.** And that is where the accusations of the devil end...at the cross...where you've been declared not guilty, and no longer condemned.

Jesus couldn't handle life w/out knowing Scripture. Do you think we can? God wants us to take the very word of God – the weapon to fight against the devil, and God wants us to memorize it, meditate on it, and dominate our thoughts. If Jesus couldn't handle life without it, what makes us think we can? How are you doing here? **Heaven and earth may pass away, but my word will never pass away. Amen.**

(Additional thought from Friday)

Parents, if we don't teach our children to love Jesus, the world will teach them not to.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, <sup>2</sup> where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

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

<sup>4</sup> Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone.’”

<sup>5</sup> The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup> And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. <sup>7</sup> So if you worship me, it will all be yours.”

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

<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> For it is written:

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

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

<sup>12</sup> Jesus answered, “It says: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

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