

Luke: Standing Strong

Sermon 1-6-2019

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Luke 4:1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness,² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.³ The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.”⁴ Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’”⁵ Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.⁶ And the devil said to him, “To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please.⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.”⁸ Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”⁹ Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here,¹⁰ for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’¹¹ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’”¹² Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”¹³ When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Manuscript:

(Play video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIb_dCIxZr0&t=10s)
For the next several months we’ll be studying the Gospel of Luke. Why Luke? As it was pointed out in the video, Luke is the first volume of a two-volume series. What’s the second volume? It’s the book of Acts. How do we know this? Well...you’ll find a lot of similarities and lots of different sources have confirmed that there is this connection between Luke and Acts. One of the most obvious similarities happens at the beginning of each book. In Luke 1, “Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us,² just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word,³ I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent **Theophilus**, [pay attention to that name]⁴ so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.” And then in Acts 1, “In the **first** book [so there must be a book that was written before the book of Acts], **Theophilus**, [the same recipient as the Gospel of Luke] I wrote about all

that Jesus did and taught from the beginning ²until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.” In one of my other sermons, I alluded to the fact that I was praying pretty hard for direction for Providence. And through all my toil, I heard the Lord tell me to continue to wait on Him. But that’s not the only thing I heard from the Lord. As I was praying and discerning the spiritual direction for 2019 for Providence, one of the prominent words that came forth was “Study.” And then through various conversations and more prayer, what came up over and over again was, “Study the book of Acts.” So while starting this Bible study, that begins this coming Wednesday, by the way, might feel random, I believe its actually a call from God. And that’s just the beginning. I believe God wants us to dig into the word and study the word all the more this year. Not that we haven’t already done so, but to see the power in the word of God and know God all the more because of our deep study of the Bible. So it seems fitting that as some of us are studying the Book of Acts in the Bible study, that we would also be exposed to the other volume, the Gospel of Luke. And I think you’re really going to enjoy witnessing how these two books compliment one another.

Since we’ve covered much of the birth narrative through the advent season and Christmas and we’ve covered the John the Baptist story, we’re going to jump ahead to chapter 4. So this is right after Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ²where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.” So for forty days Jesus ate nothing. Remember Jesus is human. Have you ever gone one day without eating? And not because you were sick. You were healthy, but you chose to go one day without eating? How did it feel? Christine has seen me when I’m hungry and it’s not a pretty picture. You know those Snickers commercials that call it “Hangry,” which by the way is officially in Webster’s Dictionary now. It’s a combination of “hungry” and “angry” for those of you who don’t know. Well...when I’m hungry, I get what I call “Ti-hangry” which is a combination of “tired,” “hungry” and “angry.” I need food. It’s not a pretty picture. I remember years ago when I was a youth pastor, and also when I was a youth, I did the 30-Hour famine. Some of you may have heard of it. Essentially, you fast from eating, you can have water, but you fast from eating for 30 hours. The point is for you and I to get glimpse at what starvation feels like in the world. While we’re doing this by choice, those impoverished around the world don’t have that choice. So it brings a keen awareness to the body. Especially when you feel those stomach aches and pains, your body telling you your hungry and at times just feeling that churning in your stomach of your stomach bile. I don’t mean to gross you out, but I want you to imagine what Jesus is going through. I only did this for 30-hours,

Jesus did this for 40 DAYS. So imagine feeling physically depleted and feeling ti-hungry, times 40, when you read this passage.

Before we enter this first temptation by the devil to Jesus, think back to the Exodus story. What happens when the Israelite people first become hungry? “²The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³The Israelites said to them, ‘If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.’” The Israelites lose faith in God over their hunger. Then with Jesus, “³The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.’ ⁴Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’” So Jesus thwarts the hunger temptation that the Israelites could not fight. He does what humanity cannot. In the next temptation, again, notice what Jesus is able to do that the Israelites could not do. “⁵Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And the devil said to him, ‘To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.’ ⁸Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’” Remember when we studied the book of Judges last summer. What was the main reason the Israelites continued to be enslaved? They kept worshipping other gods. Jesus is tempted here to worship the devil to have dominion over all the kingdoms of the world, but he resists the temptation that the Israelites could not. Without Jesus, humanity tends to worship other gods. We tend to worship the wrong things or wrong thing. “⁹Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’ ¹¹and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’” ¹²Jesus answered him, ‘It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Again, the devil tempts Jesus to see if what God says is true. The devil starts with “IF.” The devil is trying to promote disbelief that Jesus is the Son of God. The devil is trying to tempt Jesus out of the call and purpose for which he’s been given. To throw himself down, whether he’s “protected” or not, would display Jesus’ disbelief in His purpose and call. When you look across the Old Testament, you see numerous times people disbelieving the call of God. As we studied Gideon in the book of Judges this past summer, he lays down a fleece and tests God’s call to deliver Israel by the morning due on or around the fleece. He doesn’t believe God’s words. So Jesus resisting this temptation, again, displays what others could not do. Resisting this temptation solidifies our belief that Jesus is the Son of God.

Pay attention here, what does Jesus do in response to each temptation? He quotes scripture. That should tell us something. The best defense we have against temptation in this world is to know God more through scripture. But let me be careful in what I'm saying here. These words on these pages are not magical in and of themselves. The words on these pages are not what we worship. Don't mistake the words for the actual thing. BUT, how do we understand these words? Why or how do they bring meaning to our lives? We know from 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "¹⁶All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work." God has given us the scriptures to understand Him more. To understand His ways more. To build intimacy with Him more. So knowing the scriptures more isn't just about knowledge in the head sense or in the intellect sense. It's not about reading comprehension or performing well on the written test. Knowing the scriptures more is to know God more. And by "know", I mean intimate relationship with God. Think about it, those of you who have been long-time Christians, isn't it incredible how we can study the same words of scripture over and over again and somehow God still speaks into our life in that moment? The same words we've always known, but they say something new into our life again. This is how God builds intimacy with us. We see the same words and the Holy Spirit speaks anew into our lives.

For those of us with good recall skills, we recall what God says in scripture in the moments of our greatest temptations. By the way, I'm terrible at recalling and referencing scripture from memory on the spot. I can recall themes or the general lessons and thoughts. But if you ask me to reference the chapter, verse and word for word scripture piece, I'm terrible at it. So if you're like me, don't feel terrible about that. Because what's more important is that we study scripture to build intimate relationship with God. The way we understand scripture isn't by the way of the world, which may see the Bible as another textbook to conquer or more head knowledge to acquire. When we accept Jesus into our heart, we're given a new set of eyes, a new heart of understanding and new mind that is in Christ. And this is all by the way of the Holy Spirit. Hear these words in 1 Corinthians from Paul that affirms such a notion, "⁶Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. ⁷But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him"— ¹⁰these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For what

human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. ¹³And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual." The Holy Spirit is the one who helps us understand scripture more and understand God more. Jim Cymbala once said something like, "Knowledge without power is meaningless. Likewise, knowledge of the Bible without the Holy Spirit is meaningless." Who led Jesus into the wilderness in verse 1? The Holy Spirit. Who gave Jesus the words to refute back at the devil? The Holy Spirit. In John 14:26 Jesus says, "...the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you." The Holy Spirit will illumine scripture to us and help us to recall when the moment is right. But here's the thing, if you've never studied scripture or you rarely study scripture, what can the Holy Spirit recall? It's like a memory bank, if you've never put anything in the memory bank, how can the Holy Spirit recall the scriptures to help you? There's no memory to pull from.

In the last temptation, the devil does something pretty crafty. He tries to use scripture against Jesus to tempt him to test God. But it doesn't work. Why? Because what Jesus knows isn't just about head knowledge of the Old Testament. Jesus knows the Father, intimately. And the Holy Spirit helps guide him with the counter scripture. The devil knows scripture, but He doesn't know the Father and he doesn't have the Holy Spirit. There are going to be those in this world who are going to tempt you. Those who may even know the Bible very well and try to thwart your belief. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians, "¹⁴Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. [so since we know God, the Spirit, we can spiritually discern the scriptures. Those who don't know God, don't have the Spirit to discern them.] ¹⁵Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny. ¹⁶'For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ." In moments where you are tempted by those without the Spirit, without Christ, it is all the more important to rely on the Spirit. And I will say that simply quoting scripture to people who do not know Jesus will not hold authority in their lives. It will not speak to them because they don't have the Holy Spirit yet. BUT it's important for you to know the scriptures so that you know the character of God more, that you know who God is and so that the Holy Spirit can better guide you in those difficult and tempting moments. That the Holy Spirit can give you the words to stay away from temptation and to speak the truth of life that we know in Christ Jesus.

Studying scripture isn't just about head knowledge, it is most importantly about knowing God more, knowing who God is and who God is not. This is about us proclaiming the truth of Jesus and the victory that He has in our lives. This is about us living in the life of Christ and living in the victory of Jesus. This is about us living in confidence with God that the battle is already won and that Jesus has already paved the way. How do we fend-off the evil, darkness and temptation in this world? If we look at Jesus' example, it's by knowing God more and knowing God more through scripture. Scripture then becomes our shield through the voice of the Holy Spirit. And through the power of the Holy Spirit, God will not only continue to transform each and everyone of us, but God will transform this world more and more into His Kingdom. God will stamp-out the utterances of the devil and proclaim Christ's victory over death more and more. Death does not hold back Jesus. Death should not hold back those of you who believe in Him. Through our growing understanding of God through studying scripture may we proclaim the victory of Jesus to the world! May we declare the love of Jesus and that our God reigns! Amen.