



Fathered Through Temptation

Matt Younger – February 1, 2015

Amen. Happy Super Bowl Sunday to y'all. My name is Matt Younger. I'm one of the pastors here. If you were looking for another Matt, he is a little bit taller. I'm a little better looking, so it kind of evens out there. Anyway, Matthew 4:1-4 is where we'll be today. It's a famous passage here, the first temptation of Jesus Christ.

Martin Scorsese won some Academy Awards I believe with his *The Last Temptation of Christ*, the portrayal there. Ewan McGregor apparently just opened up a film in Sundance about this where he plays both Jesus and Satan, and that will be coming out in 2015, which makes him the only person to ever portray Jesus, Satan, and Obi-Wan Kenobi, which is pretty fantastic there. Anyway, this is a very famous passage. Hollywood and culture love this passage.

Let's read it and ask the Lord to speak to us. It says, **"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.""**

Father, I do pray that you would speak to us and that you would bless us and strengthen us and help us to hear. Give us eyes to see. Give us ears to hear. We pray that in Christ's name, amen.

I know temptation is an ever-going battle in the Christian life. I know specifically this campus is battling temptation daily. The Tempter loves to come in and spew out his lies about God's provision, so I want to show us two things from this text. I want to show what Jesus was fighting for and really what we learn from his fight.

When we look at the first two verses, we see that he was led up by the Spirit to be tempted by the Devil. This was the clear intention of God, to lead his Son into the wilderness. Mark is going to go so

far as to say the Holy Spirit drives Jesus into the wilderness for a showdown. This is a showdown and nothing less between Jesus and God's ancient Enemy, Satan, whose authority is most certainly threatened by Jesus' kingdom.

He comes in as the Tempter. That's his oldest form. That's what he'll be called. That's what he has been doing since the garden. We see here... This is evidence that God really does call his choice sons and daughters into difficult things. We see that from the outside. Here's the showdown. Okay? "**And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.**" This is 40 days without food. He may have had some water, but this is 40 days without food.

You have to remember Jesus is fully man. He is not mostly God with a little bit of human mixed in. He is fully man and fully God, and he's hungry. I know this. We can experience this because in January, half of this church either goes on the Whole30 or the Daniel Diet or some kind of derivative. All we're doing is we're pumping our bodies full of good nutrients like vegetables and everything else, and we're still grumpy and ornery. I'm around you guys.

We're eating good stuff, and we're grumpy, and he's not eating anything. This dude is starving. He's hungry. Temptation is where really I think the upshot of this story usually goes. It's about a temptation. That might be a little shortsighted. This word for temptation is used 36 times in the New Testament. It always is indicative of a test. Only three times does it mean temptation.

As much as this is a temptation of Jesus, this is a testing of Jesus. We know this. We know Jesus understood he was being tested because the backdrop is obvious. When we look at words like *wilderness*, the number 40, and *hunger*, this has a striking resemblance back to Deuteronomy 6-8 where Moses is reflecting upon the 40-year trek of Israel, their dramatic deliverance from Egypt, where the same things happen, the same events.

Almost every commentator is saying these two situations are lining up, and one is about the other. That story, just by way of reminder, is where God, after this dramatic deliverance, lets his people get a little bit hungry. He says this in Deuteronomy 8:3. This is Moses talking. "I humbled you and let you hunger, and I fed you with manna." There was provision all along the way, albeit not the kind of provision they wanted.

Psalm 78 recounts Israel's response, Israel's posture in this testing of 40 days without food, and it says they tested God in their hearts by demanding the food they craved. They're looking back at

Egypt going, "There was fish. There was meat. There were onions. There was celery. All you're doing is dropping this manna on us, and we miss that."

I thought in good Super Bowl Sunday fashion, with the best sports franchise in the history of sports, the Dallas Cowboys, in our city, it would be good to quote Tom Landry, who said, "The job of a coach is to make men do what they don't want to do in order to achieve what they really want." That's what God is doing in this test. Jesus understands this. It says in Deuteronomy 8:2 that God is testing them as a man disciplines his son.

Moses is saying, "He wasn't mad at you. He was trying to make you into something, and that's why you went without. He was trying to make you into something." There is deliberate hunger in Israel. There is deliberate hunger now in this story because both sons are being tested by God's design. Israel fails as the son, so the critical question now is what will Jesus do?

We enter into verse 3. Enter Satan, the Tempter who is going to ask his favorite question. **"If you are the Son..."** He's not doubting. Satan is not doubting the validity of Jesus' Sonship, but he is considering the implications. You see, Satan is a narcissist. His fundamental question, his M.O. is, "How can I make this about myself?" By extension, in his temptation, how can you make this about yourself?

He derives this idea. "Command this stone into bread." He says, "Jesus, aren't you the creative genius who holds all of these things together? I mean, don't you have something to do with the world that is formed? Are you telling me you can't use that same imagination and command these stones into a roll? How hard would that be for you? Surely the Son of God has the rights to satisfy his own needs. Look at you. You haven't eaten in 40 days. You're starving."

His question cuts right to the heart of the Father's care and provision. What Jesus hears ringing in the background is the same thing you and I want to hear. It's the thing we want to hear more than anything else, that we have what it takes, that we are the son or the daughter he delights in. He had just heard that. He was baptized. He had just heard that. The clouds open up. The Father comes down through the dove and says, "This is my son in whom I am well pleased." Such a wonderful endorsement. "I love this guy. I'm well pleased with this guy. I'm proud of him. This is my guy."

Satan's question is, "With all of that power and authority, if you really are the Son of God, if everything is really good between y'all, make it happen. How hard would it be? Just provide for

yourself. You're starving. You need calories. He's giving you rocks. Seriously?" Jesus' response, knowing he's being tested... What a wonderful response. How easy it would be to miss this. He says, **"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"**

He says, "My dad says that I will not just live off of the good things he provides. I will trust him when he does not. I will always and forever just take him at his word. Whatever he asks, the answer is yes. There is a good reason I'm starving, and it's not because he's not good." Russell Moore, in his book *Tempted and Tried...* It's fantastic. I'm going to pull from it often here. You should read it, *Tempted and Tried*.

Russell Moore says, "If Jesus had used the Spirit upon him to turn the bread into stones, he would have been rejecting his Father's promise, turning instead to his stomach, and, at the command of Satan, he would have been like us, enslaved to the Serpent through the desires of the mind and the body. God forbid." What was Jesus fighting for? He's fighting for his dad's name, to finally be the Son who would trust and honor his Father in pure dependence, and he's fighting for us because we need an example and a representative.

Everyone else has failed. Someone who for once and for all could show us what it means to trust God when our appetites are not being presently met. The man we could see triumph through every temptation under the watchful care of a loving Father and for the reward of an eternal prize. He's fighting for the Lord. He's fighting for his Father's glory, and he's fighting for us, which raises really big questions for us.

As Christians, historically, Christianity has always seen Jesus as an example and a representative for us, yet we despise, we loathe the idea of testing. "You're telling me there's something in my life I need to improve upon in a timetable I can't set with deficiencies I can't see and appetites I can't satisfy? Are you kidding me?" No, I'm not kidding you. That's basic Christianity right there.

We've always understood that Jesus is an example and a representative, and he was tested and tempted. Yet it is so terribly difficult for us to do. Jesus' temptation cuts to the heart, I think, of our struggle today, twenty-first century in Dallas. Russell Moore says, "Would we rather be fathered or fed? Would we rather be fed or fathered? Which one?"

You know, Dallas has a pretty interesting way of cultivating the appetites. We have big appetites here. We don't really like limited options. My mom, who grew up in the neighborhood (I've told you all this before) told me about in high school, there was a place that opened up in Walnut Meadow in Greenville. It was kind of a specialty place, some of you old-timers know. No pun intended.

You know what this place was. You could go there, and they had chili, and they had burgers, and they had specialty tacos. They had soft tacos. It was a place apart from a Mexican restaurant that you could go and get a soft taco, a specialized taco. This is 1975. Larry Levine started this place. It did okay. It wound up being called Chili's. You've probably heard of it. It started in Dallas, right?

Now, one of the biggest fights we have on staff when we want to have tacos here is, "Okay, let's go eat tacos. Where do you want to go? Do you want to go to Fuzzy's? Do you want to go to Torchy's? Do you want to go to Rusty? Do you want to go to Velvet? Do you want to go to Good 2 Go Taco? Which one? Paisano?" Poor Taco Bell, Taco Bueno. Who forgot about them? Taco Cabana. We love options here. We love different options to satisfy appetites.

Coffee. I go into a coffee shop, and I'm kind of an old-timer. I'm like, "Can I get a cup of coffee?" They're like, "Okay, yeah. Do you want pour-over? Do you want Chemex? Do you want it percolated? Do you want it French pressed?" I'm like, "Do you just have regular? Is regular an option?" My wife said the other day, "Hey, we're going to go to this place and get popsicles." I said, "Okay, you mean like the store, right? We're going to get popsicles at the store."

She said, "No, we're going to go to this place on lower Greenville called Steel City Pops, and we're going to get popsicles." I said, "There's a store for popsicles that you can dip in chocolate? Are you kidding me?" We love appetites here. Seriously. We love ever-available options, growing options. It's the way we live, and it all sounds good. Right?

Satan is calling a salivating Jesus to satisfy his appetite. Bread is a wonderful thing. Jesus wants bread. I mean, hear me say this. Jesus rightly recognizes that we do live off of bread. Israel loved their bread stories. The manna in the Old Testament. Jesus makes bread in the New Testament, but when Jesus begins to talk about what is behind the bread, when he begins to go deep, people begin to grumble.

This is John 6. This is a paraphrase of John 6. He says, "You celebrate manna, but Moses didn't really give you that. My Father gave you the true bread from heaven so one may eat of it and not die. That

bread is me." When Jesus begins to go deep, when he begins to say, "Hey, maybe double entendre. There is a meaning beyond the thing we see," people begin to grumble.

We get that. We understand that. In John 4, when Jesus is thirsty, he walks up to this Samaritan woman and says, "Ma'am, can I have a drink?" She balks a little bit. He says, "If you knew who you were talking to, you would ask for living water." Jesus loves to go to the meaning beyond the meaning of the appetite, that these things are not just fillers but foretastes. There is a meaning beyond having a full stomach.

This is exactly what we do when we take the Lord's Supper, when we're about to take the Lord's Supper, right, here in just a few minutes. We have this momentary craving. I know it's just this thimble of juice and a little piece of bread, but we have this momentary craving where we're saying, "Listen, this doesn't even begin to satisfy, but what it does do is it gives us a foretaste of another table where we will be satisfied."

It's satisfying a little appetite. It honestly just makes me hungry when I eat it, if I'm honest. It's an appetite that is giving us a desire for another appetite, for a final satisfaction. Moore says (and this is looking at the Old Testament story), "God provides food from the sky and water from the sky for the purpose of whetting the appetite for the gospel." That's what Moses is doing. He's whetting the appetite for the gospel.

We're not just talking about food here. I know I have all manner of food analogies in here, but there are all kinds of appetites God gives us. These appetites are innate. You talk about the creation story where God makes this garden and says, "Hey, everything here is good for taste and pleasing to the eye. Work it and keep it." Those are two of the most pregnant verbs you could... "Work it and keep it and make it yours. Stay away from that tree."

Then he puts this naked guy and this naked gal in the garden, and he says, "Yeah." I mean trust me. He's all about the appetites, giving us the appetites, helping us enjoy the appetites and figure out what is beyond. God is all about that, right? You think about appetites. We have appetite for relationship, just this sensational craving to be known, to be intimate, to have friends where you can honestly be yourself, where you don't have to pretend.

"Yeah, we're going to do the Super Bowl at our house. Y'all can come over, and it's going to be easy. You bring queso, and it'll be awesome." Those kinds of friends, right? I don't even know where I'm

going with that. You think about an appetite for work, a desire to do work, where what you do really matters, where you flourish in your giftings, where you're able to provide enough money to live. That's a legitimate appetite. That's a God-given, good appetite.

You think about family. Think about your desire, whether it's present or future, for a husband or for a wife and to maybe one day have little crazies running around your house and to be able to tell the best stories and to have your family crest and to say, "We are the Youngers. We are the Bridges. We are the Joneses." That's a good desire to have those things. It's an appetite that is God-given.

You cannot let your appetites scare you. Perverted appetites, yes, but you cannot let the appetites themselves scare you. Instead, you have to figure out a way to direct them to God in a way that makes him look attractive. That's what it means to glorify something, to direct our appetites to God in a way that makes him look attractive. They don't terminate on themselves. They go way beyond...

Appetites and cravings and satisfaction go way beyond the friend green beans at Twisted Root with a little ranch sauce. It goes way beyond the desire future or present for a good sex life with your spouse, goes way beyond the job you want to wake up for, way beyond the family pictures you want to take on the beach one day with the light this way and all of y'all wearing matching... Way beyond that. They don't terminate on that.

Appetites must be understood in the context of the Giver. Every one of our appetites rolls up and shows the creative genius and kindness of the God who created us, and he's waiting for us. He wants to be with us. You live by your appetites, but you are not your appetites alone. Jesus had an appetite for bread, but he knew it was not the right time. That's the critical difference. It was clearly not the Father's will for him to have the bread. It would have been about himself. That is not how the Father designed it to be.

He understood this, but we have a harder time. Why do we have such a hard time with this idea of foregoing appetites, of being disciplined, of being tested? Why is this so hard? Well, I think there are several reasons. I think one reason is maybe just this American idea of rugged individualism and manifest destiny. We go and get things. We're wired for that. It's a good quality to go and get things and don't let things come to us. Just go make it happen.

I think fatherlessness speaks into that. I think more and more and more, we're a generation, a room filled with people who have been affected by fatherlessness. The ideas of discipline and delayed

gratification are just less valuable for us, but I think at the end of the day, mostly it's just sin that is perpetuated by a Tempter who tells us to consider our appetites first. We have to learn from Jesus that the Enemy loves to pounce when we're starving. He loves to.

You think about what he says. This is some derivative of his M.O. right here. Satan says, "You're really a loved son, and he's a good dad, huh? You deserve this. It's your time. He's too slow. You should have the same thing as them. You've been robbed. This shouldn't be so hard. He's not fair. Why wouldn't it be okay for you to have this?"

Why even ask? Why is he keeping you hungry? Why are you waiting? Feed. Eat. You're hungry. I told you, he's not good. You're his son, right? Some dad. Just make it happen. He's holding something back from you. You're not really loved. He's not good. He can't be trusted." That's the oldest trick in his book.

The lesson to the Israelites, God speaking to Moses after the fact, says this. It says this. He says, "I know it wasn't the food you wanted or the clothes you wanted to wear, but I was testing you. I was being your dad. I was teaching you something you had to learn, and you're not in trouble. I was teaching you something you had to learn. You're not in trouble. I love you."

Yet, the ongoing battle of our lives for so many of us is still that question of whether or not we would rather be fathered or fed. Would we rather be fed or fathered? We think about our cash situation, our work situation, our comfort situation. However you want to call it, you're going, "Hey listen, I'm making less than I can comfortably live off of. I don't have the money everyone else has to buy the things I should buy.

I'm not making the money I should have now to have the things I want. My friends are starting to upgrade. They're starting to go on vacations, and Satan is going, 'See what they have that you don't have? Turn these stones into imaginary money.'" That's just another way to say consumer debt. "Turn these stones into imaginary money you don't have."

Hey, listen. Some debt is good debt. Some of us are coming out of bad debt, bad decisions, but Dallas, for being one of the most affordable cities in the United States, has one of the highest per capita consumer credit card debt ratios in the United States. "Turn something you don't have into something you want in order to satisfy an appetite you don't think I'm meeting."

We think about family. You're trolling Facebook. They just had their third baby, and she gets to stay home, and Satan whispers, "It's not fair. You should have that too. You see what he's holding back from you? You think he really loves you?" You feed on the bread of self-pity and gossip. "How hard is it for me? How easy is it for them? It's just so easy to be them and so hard to be me. He's not good." That's what you're saying. That's what the Enemy wants you to think.

How about this one. Are you ready for this? Talking about that desire for relationship, right. You've been to your twelfth wedding in 12 weeks. You're broke. You're just like, "I can't buy another tux. I just can't do it." You hit that imaginary age where you go after this age, "I'm damaged goods," right? You spend that final weekend at home where no one calls you, no one texts you.

Satan is there whispering, "You're past your prime. He loves you less. Go make something happen. Have fun. Get creative. He's ancient. This is the twenty-first century. You're not your grandma. Christians all around you are doing this." You know those lies. You hear them all the time, and I see you give in to them. He is just calling you to awaken and to indulge this craving.

I'm not talking to a Christian in this room right now who is not a covenant member here, and I'm certainly not talking to you if you're not a Christian, but I cannot tell you how many covenant members of The Village Church (and it's breaking my heart, and it's making me angry) have given themselves over to pornography, and you have no idea what you're doing.

You're going to spend years in my office because you're rewiring your mind to lust over something that is not even real, that is imaginary. You're giving yourself over, and you're experiencing things in sex. You're having sex, and you're a Christian, and you're not married, and you're a covenant member, and you're having sex because you don't think the Lord is good enough, and you have no idea what kind of fire you're playing with.

It's breaking my heart, and it's making us angry that you would believe those kinds of lies. Are you serious? Moore says this. "You're never going to get the girl you're looking at naked enough to fulfill the desire God has put in your heart. The desire God has put in your heart is the mystery of Jesus Christ." How many times do you have to hear me say that? Please stop. It's breaking my heart, and it's making me angry that you are giving yourselves over to that. Please hear me say I love you.

It is so hard for me to walk in this every day and continue to have the same conversations, and this is happening because we would rather be fed than fathered, because Satan comes and whispers,

"Feed your appetite and forego the tough love of a Father because you know better, and there is grace anyway." That's what he says.

What you need to know about perverted grace is that the Deceiver loves to float this ambiguous idea of grace, this unfounded idea of grace if it means he's giving you enough rope to hang yourself. The most wonderful, beautiful prose maybe in the entire Bible of Romans 5, that grace abounded all the more, is forever bound to Romans 6 where Paul says, "Should we continue in sin so that grace should abound? By no means!" It's the most emphatic way he can say no.

Is there grace upon grace? Of course. Of course, there is grace upon grace. Should we continue to give in to our appetites so that grace may abound? No. Why would you? You died. You already died. That's what Paul says in Romans 6. He says, **"We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing..."**

If you're living by your appetites, and you're saying, "God is giving it," and you're giving yourself over to this cheap idea of grace, that's so cheap. That's cheap grace. That's cheap. That's what Bonhoeffer said. "It's cheap grace. It's the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance. It's the baptism without church discipline. It's Communion without confession. It's absolution without personal confession."

Cheap grace is grace without discipleship. It's grace without the cross. It's grace without Jesus Christ. You are taking the crown jewel of the Christian faith, that you are saved by grace, and you're throwing it away, and you're wearing a cheap ring that you got from Cece's. If that's your view of grace, that God has it, he just has it, you're forgetting that you died. You're forgetting you're a new creation.

Listen to me. You're forgetting you have a dad who loves you and who knows exactly what you need. Here the Enemy comes in. "Are you sure he's good? Are you sure he loves you? Listen to your stomach. You're starving." The lie of the Enemy...hear me out...is to boil you down to your appetites and to tell you that you are what you need.

Moore tells us your greatest need is not to be fed; it is to be fathered. Do you see Jesus fighting for you? Jesus heard the voice of his Father, and he believed the words, "You are my beloved Son. With you I am well pleased." Those invisible words were louder for him than a stomach's growl. There is the battle of our lives. Would we rather be fed, or would we rather be fathered?

What do we learn from his fight? What do we learn specifically from Jesus' fight? Well, he fought for us, and he fought with us. There is no person (take solace in this) in history who has not caved in to their appetites until one man, Jesus Christ, who had nothing to prove, triumphs over this temptation and every other one. Finally, the true Son of Israel with whom the Father is well pleased, and he says, "Father, I gladly offer up my life as the substitute, as a sacrifice for them."

The only selfless man in history was slaughtered for the selfish because he loves us and because he knows we need to be fathered. He does this to share his trophies with us. The rightful rewards that are his he shares with us, what Peter calls the inheritance that is waiting in heaven for us. It's the costly gift of grace anyone can receive if they give their life to it.

You receive it as you give your life to it. You are not forgiven to do whatever in the world you want to do. You're forgiven so now you can give your life to this man who gave his life for you and to bring everything in your life into obedience. I don't think anyone has said it better than D. A. Carson who is talking about grace-driven effort, that grace is not opposed to effort; it's opposed to earning. Grace is not opposed to trying hard; it's opposed to thinking you deserve something for what you're doing. We fight hard because Jesus fought for us.

He's fighting for us, and he's fighting with us. He teaches us how to fight. Don't lose sight of the grace of God. Titus says the grace of God teaches us how to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions. You today, right now, if you're in Christ, you genuinely have the ability to defeat temptation. Isn't that amazing? You genuinely right now can defeat temptation. Jesus has enabled you. He has given you the means by the Holy Spirit to do that.

He fights for us by taking his Father at his word. How easy would it be for us to miss what Jesus did not? It is written. He said, "I am not my appetites. You are not your appetites. You are not how you feel. You are beloved to the Father, and he is too good to forget you." Whether you're starving or well-fed (both of those cycles will likely be true), your testing is not hatred; it's love. It's never hatred. It's always love.

Do you trust him? That's just my question as we finish. Do you trust him in your own temptations as your stomach is grumbling, as you want it so badly? Do not believe those things. They are cheap, cheap, cheap, cheap lies. Do not believe those things. Fight. Seriously, fight. He's a good Father. He knows exactly what you need.

Tim Keller loves to tell his church that every believer in Christ is on a collision course for greatness. He is making you something altogether different. I cannot wait for my resurrected body where LeBron and I will be able to play basketball. He is making you something altogether different. He is making you great. That's why he's testing you. Fight. Fight with the grace he enables. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for the way you love us and the way you have attended to us and your mercy for us. I pray for blessing over this congregation, to hear what we need to, to see what we need to see, to repent where we need to repent. Thank you, Jesus, that you didn't just give us the loaves to eat. You gave us the loaves and said, "By taking this, you eat my flesh, and you drink my blood, and you take in all of me."

I pray that the gospel today, even more than it ever has been, would be that pearl of great price. I pray that it would be that thing we give up our lives to go find, that treasure we go find. I pray we would lose our lives in order to gain it and that you would help us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passion. Thank you, Jesus, that you did that so well for us. In Christ's name, amen.