

Sermon Title: **A Spiritual Journey**

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Scripture Reference: **Matthew 4:1-11**

Thesis: **At the beginning of Jesus' ministry He was led for a time of testing in the wilderness;**

Purpose: **We can learn from Jesus how to face our spiritual battles when seeking God's direction.**

I) Introduction: Scripture Reading is: **Matthew 4:1-11**

A) The Setting:

- 1) **Today is the first Sunday of Lent.**
 - (a) Do you know what that means?
 - (b) And it is not just the time for our Lenten concerts which do start today.
- 2) **Lent began last Wednesday signifying 40 days before Resurrection Sunday not counting the Sunday's in between.**
 - (a) It is meant to be a time of reflection and soul searching often accompanied by fasting and praying building up to the celebration of Resurrection Sunday.
 - (b) It is perhaps the most important celebration event of the Christian calendar year.
 - (c) For without the resurrection there would be no church or Christian religion.
- 3) **It is the time when Jesus fulfilled His rescue mission for fallen man.**
 - (a) After suffering and dying on the cross for the sins of all mankind.
 - (b) After having been placed in the grave for 3 days Jesus rose defeating our greatest enemy . . . DEATH!
- 4) **But today we are back at the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry.**
 - (a) Back to where it all began 3 years earlier.
 - (b) Jesus while just beginning to gather a few followers of Galilean fishermen and promising to make them fisher's of men.
 - (c) Jesus traveled down to the Jordan River finding his cousin, John the Baptizer.
- 5) **Here, Jesus had John reluctantly baptize him as an example to follow.**
 - (a) As we begin our commitment to living for Jesus; Baptism is not a sort of divine hazing so that you can get into the eternity club.
 - (b) Rather it is a public confession or your allegiance to follow Jesus, the Son of God.
 - (c) Jesus said that those who would deny Him publicly . . . He would deny knowing to Our Heavenly Father.
 - (d) We must begin with a public confession of FAITH in Jesus as the Son of God and ask Him to be our Lord and Baptism is the best way to let everyone know there has been a change in management.
- 6) And so, this is where our story for today begins; now, let us experience the story for ourselves by going to our scripture reading for today from the gospel of **Matthew, chapter 4, verses 1-11.**

B) *Sermon Prayer*

C) (The Hook)

- 1) **Have you ever faced any spiritual battles in your spiritual walk?**
 - (a) Perhaps you are facing a time of testing right now?
 - (b) A time of wondering WHY God doesn't seem to be there leaving you feel as if you are alone in the wilderness of life?
- 2) **How about decisions concerning your future?**
 - (a) Do you consider those to be spiritual decisions or just your preference?
 - (b) When you are about to begin a new venture do you consider what God wants for you . . . or is it strictly what you want?
- 3) **Are you looking for God to bless your efforts and decisions?**
 - (a) I certainly hope so; therefore, do you not think that it might be wise to seek God's guidance before making any big decisions?

- (b) Making sure you are doing HIS will and not your own desire?
- 4) In today's study we are going to see that Jesus gives us an example to follow when we are facing spiritual battles to find God's will and direction for our life.

TS: **We are going to begin by seeing that Jesus' wilderness experience was first . . .**

II) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: **A Spiritual Quest**

- 1) **Matthew 4:1 tells us that Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit.**
 - (a) This was a spiritual quest; a journey into the wilderness to allow Jesus to be tempted by Satan.
 - (b) **Jesus was to be allowed to be tempted in all the ways that we are tempted.**
 - (i) Jesus was tempted to put His physical needs above His Spiritual needs.
 - (ii) Jesus was tempted to test God's real ability to take care of Him.
 - (iii) Jesus was tempted to exalt His desire for POWER over that of the Heavenly Father's will.
 - (c) **All these represent the ways we are tested**
 - (i) Temptations to fulfill our Fleshly desires.
 - (ii) Temptations to test God's ability to care for us showing a lack of faith and trust.
 - (iii) Temptations for personal recognition and Power exalting ourselves over God.
- 2) **Before Jesus' temptation came a time of fasting and praying; 40 days of seeking God's direction for the ministry God had for Jesus.**
 - (a) We need to understand what fasting is about here.
 - (b) It is going for a time without the physical to allow you to focus on the spiritual.
 - (c) 40 days of Jesus preparation for the up-coming spiritual battle.
 - (d) **Battles are rarely won in the trenches; but in the preparations for times of battle.**
- 3) **Fasting is a personal decision done in a personal quiet way in an effort to come closer to God.**
 - (a) We have all probably had to fast for short periods of time if we had to have surgery or a medical procedure where they are going to render you unconscious for a while.
 - (b) But when you are doing a spiritual fast . . . you are seeking direction from God.
 - (c) You are giving up the physical for a period of time to allow you to devote your entire energy and focus on finding God's leading.
- 4) **It is a solo thing that is not to be a public spectacle.**
 - (a) It is not something you do by making an announcement to draw attention to yourself like "*look how holy I am.*"
 - (b) It is something that you may feel led to do when you are particularly facing a difficult choice and you want to make sure you are hearing God.
- 5) **In this case Jesus is facing a difficult path, a horrific persecution and death and Jesus, the man needed to ensure connection to God the Father.**
 - (a) So the Spirit of God led Jesus into the wilderness for a time of testing.
 - (b) Not to be tested by God; but to allow Satan an opportunity to make His best pitch, yes . . .

TS: **It was a Spiritual quest; but it was also . . .**

B) Key Point #2: **A Spiritual Test**

- 1) **Once Jesus was physically weakened, this is when Satan came to tempt Him.**
 - (a) This is always the best time for Satan to send temptation our way.
 - (b) When we are most vulnerable, that is when temptations will be the strongest.
- 2) **This is why it is important to stay strong by getting our rest, taking care of our bodies, and putting on the FULL armor of God.**
 - (a) **Ephesians 6:10-20** outlines the armor available to the spiritual warrior.
 - (i) The Belt of Truth – Jesus is the truth.

- (ii) The Breastplate of Righteousness – making sure you are right with God!
- (iii) The appropriate footwear to make you quick to proclaim the Gospel of Peace – ready and willing to share the good news of God's power in your life.
- (iv) Your Shield of Faith – trusting God to be in control.
- (v) The helmet of salvation – when we were rescued from death we were enlisted in God's army. (*We have been saved into the kingdom of God.*)
- (b) **And finally we have the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.**
 - (i) God gave us His Word that we would be able to fight off our temptations;
 - (ii) but it only does us any good if we have been building up an arsenal by reading and committing the Word of God to memory.
- 3) **But you see this begs an interesting question here; could Jesus have sinned?**
 - (a) Could Jesus, the Son of God opted to give into temptation and sin?
 - (b) Jesus is GOD after all and God cannot tolerate Sin.
 - (c) This paradox is not possible because God cannot sin?
 - (d) So, why did God allow Himself to be tempted?
- 4) **Well, let's look at an Illustration that might help us better understand:**
 - (a) As the Union Pacific Railroad was being constructed, an elaborate trestle bridge was built across a large canyon in the West.¹
 - (b) Wanting to test the bridge, the builder loaded a train with enough extra cars and equipment to double its normal payload.
 - (c) The train was then driven to the middle of the bridge, where it stayed an entire day.
 - (d) One worker asked, "Are you trying to break this bridge?"
 - (e) "No," the builder replied, "I'm trying to prove that the bridge won't break."
 - (f) In the same way, the temptations Jesus faced weren't allowed by God to see if Christ would sin; but to prove that He wouldn't.
- 5) **Matthew in His writings was trying to prove to His fellow Jews that Jesus was the Son of God and the promised Messiah as He claimed.**
 - (a) Jesus exposes Satan & his tactics here; but He also shows us we can defeat Satan.
 - (b) Therefore, we can learn from Jesus' example how to be victorious using the FULL Armor of God when facing our own temptations.
- 6) **Jesus was able to use his Armor and especially the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.**
 - (a) Every time that Satan tried to tempt Him Jesus used scripture to combat Him.
 - (b) Jesus knew the Holy Scriptures!
 - (c) But Satan knows scripture too; only he distorts it and tries to get you to apply it only in part.
 - (d) Satan has a habit of leaving out critical information when he quotes God's Word.
- 7) **It was that way in His very first encounter with Eve in the Book of Genesis.**
 - (a) Where he said, "Did God say that you should not eat from any tree in the garden?"
 - (b) Satan knew what God said and yet tried to place doubt by twisting God's Word.
 - (c) That is why we must be careful when we study it to find the true meaning.

TS: **So, it was a Spiritual quest and Spiritual test to prove God could not sin; and it was also . . .**

C) Key Point #3: **A Spiritual Comfort**

- 1) **After Jesus defeated Satan's attempts to tempt Him we are told that Satan left the scene.**
 - (a) And who shows up?
 - (b) God sent His angels to care for Jesus.
- 2) **God has used many angels to help His servants, many times they and we were probably unaware of who they were.**

- (a) God sent angels to Elijah after he defeated the Baal priests and Jezebel threatened to have Him killed.
- (b) The angels came to him twice and nourished Elijah with food and a warming fire. (1 Kings 19:6-7)
- 3) **Our testing is often about showing us that we will learn to stand in the strength of God.**
 - (a) God may send His Angels who are ministering spirits according to Hebrews 1:14.
 - (b) Or God may send the comforter, the Holy Spirit who is there to encourage and strengthen you.
- 4) **God will not allow his followers to be tempted beyond their strength.**
 - (a) God will provided the strength to endure the temptation.
 - (b) But if we are not using the weapons God has given us we will fall quickly.
- 5) **We must put on the Armor of God and take it seriously.**
 - (a) God does His part.
 - (b) But He will not force us to do our part.
 - (c) We must discipline ourselves to use that which God has given us.
 - (d) And we can trust that God will be there to comfort us and help us get our strength back after a time of testing.

TS: **So, what is important to remember here?**

III) Conclusion (Life Application)

A) **Let me illustrate using a glove.**

- 1) **This glove can be used to pick up hot or cold items.**
 - (a) But if I leave it sitting here and command it to pick up these items it will do nothing.
 - (b) In order for the glove to be useful I must first put it on my hand.
- 2) **In many ways we are like that glove.**
 - (a) If we try to fight spiritual battles on our own we will find it less than effective.
 - (b) In order to be powerful we must put on the Full armor of God.
- 3) **That begins with asking God to send His Holy Spirit to take control of our lives.**
 - (a) Jesus said that He had to go away in order that the comforter could come.
 - (b) Jesus prepared the way by settling the debt each of us owed for our sins.
- 4) **God could not associate with us until the debt was paid.**
 - (a) Now that our sin has been filtered through the blood of Jesus.
 - (b) God can once again have a relationship with His people.
 - (c) That is why He sends His Spirit to live in us.

B) **How do you know if you have that Spirit?**

- 1) Well are you growing in your relationship with God?
- 2) Are you craving spiritual food and an active relationship with your creator?
- 3) Are you noticing a change in the fruit of God's Spirit?
- 4) Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Generosity, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control?

C) **Then Jesus, through His Spirit can show us how we can overcome spiritual battles.**

- 1) Take a Spiritual Journey of your own and seek out God's will for you.
- 2) It is never to late for God to use us where He has us.
- 3) Put on the Armor of God and get prepared for the battles ahead.
- 4) It is a quest; you will be tested at times; but you will also find that God is there to comfort you when you need it most.