

The Goodness of Our Redeemer

Matthew 4:1-11

Galatians 4:4-5 says, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."

That verse reminds us that God's sending of Jesus into the world happened according to His plans and in His timing.

When I stop to consider that for a moment I am always amazed.

The LORD has never been surprised or caught off guard, but has always had the entirety of time in view as He has acted in history to redeem His people and His creation.

We saw that last week as we went all the way back to the beginning of the Bible.

The Bible shows us in the first three chapters of Genesis that our amazing God made a good creation and that the rebellion of the first human beings Adam and Eve brought corruption into the world.

There was the corruption of the human heart and the corruption of the creation itself.

Instead of loving and trusting in the goodness of the LORD and His promises people are now given to pride and rebellion.

Instead of enjoying life in a perfect creation we now live in the world under a shadow of death.

As bad as that is, right from the moment of the fall of humanity God makes a promise that a redeemer would be born into the world to set things right.

From Genesis to Malachi we read of many people being born and used by the LORD anticipating His promise of restoration to be fulfilled.

We read of Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Josiah, Daniel, and many others.

Servants of the LORD who believed His Word and did many great things, but who were unable to undo the corruption of this present creation and crush the head of the serpent as God had promised in Genesis 3:15.

The reason why all those servants were unable to fulfill the promise is because each one of them were themselves in need of a redeemer.

Each one of them stumbled in various ways, each one of them followed in the example of our first parents.

Throughout the Old Testament we can see that the banishment from Eden persists.

We also see time and again God pointing to the fulfillment of His promise of redemption.

Every servant of God in the Old Testament points us to our need of someone better.

[Ordinary men fall short and so *‘in the fullness of time God sent forth His Son, born of a woman (Gen 3:15), and born under the law’*. As we continue to consider the big picture of the cross and empty tomb of Jesus Christ this morning we are turning our attention to the ‘goodness of our Redeemer’. In order to do that we are going to look at **Matthew 4:1-11**. In these verses we find the LORD Jesus confronted by the devil himself. In this confrontation we see Jesus do what everyone else fails to do, we see Him remain faithful to God in the face of temptation. This goes to the very heart of why we can look to Jesus for real help and hope, because where we fall short He never does. The first area of faithfulness that we see from Jesus in this passage comes in verse one where we see that...]

Point #1 – Jesus faithfully follows divine direction. (Verse 1)

In His humanity, our LORD always goes where the Spirit leads Him.

It is important for us to take note of the context here.

The beginning of chapter four comes immediately after Jesus’ baptism where the Holy Spirit descends on Him like a dove and God the Father’s voice declares from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

I take the statement ‘well pleased’ to mean that God the Father is fully satisfied with the human nature that Jesus took upon Himself when He was conceived in Mary’s womb some thirty years before His baptism.

The descent of the Spirit indicates that there is perfect fellowship between the humanity of Christ and God.

Like Adam in the garden before the fall, there is no barrier between God and Jesus.

Having made that clear, Matthew tells us this in **4:1**.

Jesus going into the desert/wilderness to be tempted happens at the direction of the Holy Spirit.

It is important to point out, as Leon Morris does in his commentary, that “God is not doing the tempting He is permitting it and therefore using Satan to forward His purposes.”

It is important for us to connect this with what happened in the garden.

Remember God, because He is just, gave Adam a command that must be obeyed.

He permitted the serpent in the garden to examine the hearts of Adam and Eve.

Will they trust in the goodness of the LORD or disobey Him?

The Spirit leads Jesus out into the wilderness for the purpose of that very same examination of the heart.

If Jesus is really going to be the promised redeemer, then His goodness has to be subjected to testing.

[Think of it like this. How many of you have ever driven over a bridge? If you had the choice between a bridge where materials and designs had been tested and proven safe and another bridge built with untested materials and designs which one would you want to drive over?]

What Jesus experiences here is a necessary part of His redeeming work.

He must demonstrate His goodness, He must keep God's laws, and so the Spirit leads Him into a place of isolation where He will have to square off against the devil.

There is little doubt that Jesus was fully aware of what was coming and yet Matthew gives us no indication whatsoever that Jesus resisted this in any way.

Instead He submits Himself to the leading of the Spirit.

He always goes where God leads Him.

[We have a good Saviour brothers and sisters. One Who understands that God's direction can be trusted in everything. So many times in the pages of Scripture we find people hesitating and thinking up excuses about why they can't go where the LORD asks, but with Jesus we find someone who willfully follows God's leading. In addition to following divine direction we see our Redeemer's goodness in the next few verses as...]

Point #2 – Jesus faithfully depends on God's provision. (Verses 2-4)

While our Saviour in His genuine humanity felt the needs of His body, He never loses sight of the fact that life us ultimately sustained by the creator of all things.

Look with me at what is said about Jesus in verse 2.

If you know your Old Testament you know the number 40 is significant.

Most commentators see a clear connection between Jesus, Moses, and Elijah.

Moses fasted forty days and nights, according to Exodus 34:28 in the wilderness of Sinai meeting with the LORD on the mountain.

Elijah was in the wilderness of Sinai that same length of time according to 1Kings 19:8 and it seems likely that he was fasting as well.

The number forty comes up with the people of Israel as a whole as well.

They spent forty years in the wilderness.

Even with those few examples it seems pretty clear Jesus is identifying Himself God's covenant people Israel.

He is acting here on behalf of God's people.

After forty days and nights without food Matthew says here that Jesus 'was hungry'.

That is important to catch. His humanity is really real. He felt the effects of His body really needing food in order to be sustained.

That is where the devil attempts an attack in **verse 3**.

It seems that Satan is issuing a direct challenge to the declaration of God at the end of chapter three where He says of Jesus, "This is My beloved Son".

It is like the devil is saying, "If that is really true just use your power and make some food for yourself."

What is on the line here is not Jesus' ability to turn stones into bread.

In His divinity that would be no problem at all.

What is on the line here is His human capacity to trust in the leading and provision of God the Father.

Why is He in the desert with no food? Because He followed the leading of the Spirit.

Turning stones into bread would have showed an unwillingness to trust in God's ability to care for Him in the place where He called Him to be.

Jesus responds with God's word in **Verse 4**.

I love that phrase 'It is written'. It clearly speaks to the fact that though the Scriptures have been written in the past, they continue to carry the same weight and authority in the present.

Jesus knows that human beings were designed to need things like food to point us to our greater need which is the LORD.

Think of the contrast here between Jesus and Adam.

God gave Adam an endless supply of food and the devil got him to doubt the goodness of God which led to disobedience.

Jesus has had nothing to eat for forty days and He continues to trust in God and depend fully on Him to sustain His life.

[Where Adam failed, Jesus succeeds. That is exactly why He can help us. That is exactly why He is the one born of a woman who will crush the head of the serpent because of His perfect goodness. Of course we know Satan is not one to give up easily so he comes against Jesus again with another temptation. In this second temptation we see that in addition to trusting in God's provision...]

Point #3 – Jesus faithfully trusts in God’s promises. (Verses 5-7)

Our redeemer’s confidence in Scripture is unwavering which keeps Him from acting in pride and instead remains certain that His Heavenly Father will always do what He says.

Having failed in his attempt to get Jesus to abandon His faithfulness to God in physical need, the devil changes gears and tries to use God’s Word against our Redeemer. (Verse 5-6)

This is one of the most subtle and dangerous tactics of the devil.

Remember in the Garden of Eden, Satan questioned God’s word.

He led in his temptation with the words, “Did God actually say…” and then he twisted what the LORD actually said.

That is surely a tactic being employed today.

You can name any issue you would like in the so called ‘progressive’ church today in which people are encouraged to embrace what the Bible says is wrong and you will hear them say, “The Bible doesn’t really mean what it says!”

Here is a simple way to know that is where they are coming from. Ask them to find a passage that affirms the behaviour they are advocating for.

If you know your bible that line of attack from the devil won’t work on you.

He doesn’t even try that here with Jesus, instead he quotes the scripture with pretty good accuracy.

The twist here is much more subtle then denying God’s word or misquoting it.

The twist here is the misapplication of the WORD.

He is basically saying if the Bible is true and you are God’s Son jump off the roof and He will catch you.

Look at how Jesus responds in **verse 7**.

This scripture comes from Deuteronomy 6:16 which references the incident recorded in Exodus 17 where the people of Israel were without water in the desert.

They grumbled and complained against Moses, the question why he every led them out of Egypt, and in their thirst they ask this question, “*Is the LORD among us or not?*”

Is God really going to take care of us? Give us water to prove God is who He says He is.

You see the devil isn’t really asking Jesus to prove himself, he is trying to get Jesus to demand God the Father prove Himself.

[Have you ever been in a conversation with an unbeliever who says something along the lines of, “If God does a miracle for me to see, then I’ll believe!” They say that as if God hasn’t done enough already. When the people of Israel put God to the test they had already seen all the miracles in Egypt and the Red Sea parted, and received manna from heaven. Any yet they say to God, “Prove yourself again!”]

You know if the devil had pushed Jesus here God would have without a doubt commanded His angels and been faithful to His promise.

He wasn't interested in the truth of God's Word, he wanted Jesus to ask God for proof as if the heavens opening and announcing Jesus' to be His beloved Son was not enough.

[Just as Jesus succeeds where Adam fails, so to Jesus' succeeds where Israel had failed. His trust in His Father and His promises is unwavering. Once again He demonstrates His goodness and worth. The goodness and worth that is necessary in the one who can redeem what human rebellion has corrupted. Having gained no ground in his first two attempts, Satan tries a third time to get Jesus to fall like Adam. His third temptation show us another important aspect of our Saviour's goodness. It shows us that...]

Point #4 – Jesus faithfully remains devoted to God. (Verses 8-10)

In the human heart of Christ there has always been and always will be an unrivaled affection for His heavenly Father.

Listen to what the devil does in verses 8-9.

What the devil is able to do here shows him to possess a significant amount of power.

It would seem he is able to transport Jesus across significant distances in a rather short period of time.

He is also able to create visible images out of what seems to be thin air.

It would be impossible to see all the kingdoms of the world from one spot no matter how high.

But it would seem that it is possible for Satan to create visible images of the glory of earthly kingdoms and pass them in front of Jesus for Him to see.

This temptation struck me as quite strange at first.

If the devil knows that Jesus is the Son of God, then surely he knew that Jesus has already laid claim to the kingdoms of the world.

It hardly seems like much of a temptation to offer what already belongs to Him.

It's possible that the devil does not fully comprehend who Jesus is, because his mind is too small to comprehend the mystery of the incarnation.

It is also possible that his hatred for God is so intense that his nature compels him to act this way even though he knows it won't do him any good.

Whatever the answer may be here the attack is directly focused on Jesus humanity.

In both Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45 Jesus says that, "...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many."

What the devil is offering Him here is a chance to bypass all the humility, service, and suffering in exchange for all the riches and power the world has to offer.

The question that is on the table here is, "Which is worth more? The entire world or God?"

Here is how Jesus responds. (**Verse 10**)

His clear and resounding answer is that there is no gain whatsoever in exchanging the infinite glory of the living God for all the world has to offer.

Adam and Eve were willing to exchange their relationship with God because they believed the lie that they could become their own gods.

Many grumblers in Israel were willing to walk away from the LORD for some fish and cucumbers back in Egypt.

Our Saviour never for a moment doubted the immeasurable worth of the LORD.

[Despite being in the wilderness forty days, being hungry, and likely exhausted Jesus never waivers for a moment in the face of temptation. He faithfully follows divine direction, depends on God's provision, trusts in God's promises, and remains completely devoted to God the Father. All of that is a clear testimony to the goodness of our Saviour which leads to this important conclusion in verse 11, that...]

Point #5 – Jesus prevails because He is faithful. (Verse 11)

Our Saviour never once gave into temptation He is able to defeat every enemy opposed to God and rescue His people from their failures.

Go back to verse 10 for a moment.

Just before Jesus quotes the command to worship and serve only the LORD, He says, "*Be gone Satan!*"

That is a command! From verses 3-9 it looks like the devil has the upper hand, it looks like he is the one with the power, but the truth is that is not the case at all.

Jesus was in the wilderness because the Spirit led Him there.

God is the One Who is in control of this situation the entire time.

This whole thing was a necessary examination of the goodness of Christ.

If Jesus is going to be the redeemer that God promised all the way back in the garden then He must succeed where Adam failed, He must succeed where everyone in the whole history of the world has failed.

He must endure temptation and choose to do what is right.

That is exactly what we see here in His interaction with the devil.

We see him remain faithful despite His hunger, we see Him remain faithful in trusting God's promises, and we see Him remain faithful in His affection for God.

Because that is so, we read this in **Verse 11**.

Why does the devil leave?

I believe he is compelled by the power of God to obey Jesus' command from verse 10.

Not only does the devil leave, but angels come and minister to Him, likely giving Him food and water and whatever else He needed in His humanity to continue on in His mission of redemption.

Simply put brothers and sisters Jesus wins.

This occasion of being tempted by the devil can be applied to the entirety of Jesus' life.

The bible says in Hebrews 4:15, that Jesus "in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet [He is] without sin."

That is why He can redeem us and this creation from the corruption of sin.

He can help us because He faced every temptation and was completely faithful throughout His entire time upon the earth.

That is why He can offer Himself in our place upon the cross, that is why God the Father is pleased with His sacrifice, and can justly offer forgiveness to us in Jesus' name, because our Redeemer has been completely faithful in every respect.

And because of His faithfulness the cross is not the end. Oh I'm sure Satan was quite pleased when Jesus died, but that was very short lived because God raised Christ from the dead and He is the first among many on account of His faithfulness.

If we are going to understand the big picture of what Jesus accomplished through His life, death, and resurrection, then we need to have a proper understanding of His goodness.

If we look to ourselves or any other human being no matter who they may be we will find no hope because as the bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God".

The only one Who can prevail over sin, and death, and hell, is the One Who faced every temptation and remained faithful.

That is the goodness of our Redeemer.