

Matthew 4C

- Tonight, we return to Satan's temptations of Christ

A couple built their dream home, but they overspent and found themselves "house poor" struggling to make ends meet. They were so cash strapped, that the only entertainment they could afford was to go window-shopping at the mall.

So they entered the department store, and the husband quickly disappeared into the men's clothing section, while the wife made a beeline for the women's section. A short time later, the wife came out carrying a shopping bag with a brand new \$1,000 dress inside.

Her husband was shocked, and asked, "How could you do this?! You know we have no money!"

Sheepishly, the wife replied, "I saw this dress on the rack and found myself imagining how I would look in it. I tried it on in the dressing room, and the next thing I knew I had bought it. It was like Satan was whispering in my ear, 'You look fabulous in that dress. Buy it!'"

"Well," the husband replied, "You know how I deal with that kind of temptation. I say, 'Get behind me, Satan!'"

"I did," replied his wife," but then he said, 'It looks fabulous from back here, too!'

- Have you ever felt like that...like you couldn't help yourself from taking Satan's bait?
 - Well, you're certainly not alone
 - Satan is the wisest creature God has ever made
 - So it's no surprise he has great skill to lead us astray
 - We studied the first of Satan's temptations last week
 - The enemy asked Jesus to prove the Word of God concerning His identity, asking if you're the Son of God, make stones into bread
 - In dissecting the enemy's methods, we noted how Satan begins by untethering us from the Word of God
 - Satan indicts the Word of God, subtly, seeking to place a seed of doubt in our minds

- Satan leads us to rethink what we already know, to doubt God's instructions, to justify our desires as consistent with God's word
 - Once Satan has untethered us from the anchor of God's Word, we're floating free
 - Now all Satan requires is a temptation to incentivize us to consummate our lust, leading to sin
- Last week, we learned the three ways we can be tempted to sin
 - 1 John 2:16 taught that everything of the world can be classified as the lust of the flesh, the lust or attraction of the eyes or the pride of life
 - Jesus' first temptation was directed at the lust of His body, His flesh
 - Satan suggested Jesus make bread from stones to prove the Word of God concerning Jesus' identity
 - Satan wanted Jesus to give up His fast because he knew that if bread appeared before Jesus, Jesus would be strongly tempted to eat it
 - So Satan drew from the Exodus to suggest Jesus repeat the miracle of manna to prove His identity
 - Of course, Jesus wisely resisted Satan's temptation
 - Beginning with re-affirming His anchor in the Word of God
 - God's Word tells us that obeying God is more important than satisfying our body's desires
 - Had Jesus made bread from stones, He would have proven Himself to be the Son of God
 - Yet simultaneously, He would have acted against the instructions of the Father, thereby contradicting the Word of the Father
 - The lesson being, if we trade our obedience for fleshly desires, we forfeit eternal things to gain temporal things...and that's a bad deal
 - So let's look at the second temptation...

Matt. 4:5 Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,

[Matt. 4:6](#) and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written,

'He will command His angels concerning You';

and

'On their hands they will bear You up,

So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.'"

[Matt. 4:7](#) Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

- If you were to compare Luke's account with this account, you'll notice that the events are recorded in a different order
 - The difference is due to the authors' different purposes in writing
 - Luke opens his Gospel saying he was writing to explain events in chronological order
 - While Matthew's purpose was to show Jesus as the King promised to Israel
 - So Luke's account has the actual order of temptations, while Matthew's account has them building to the most important
 - Since we're in Matthew, we'll follow his order
 - Satan's first temptation was directed at the lust of the flesh
 - The next temptation in Matthew's Gospel is directed at the pride of life
 - Satan takes Jesus from the wilderness to the "holy city", which is Jerusalem
 - It's unclear to us whether Satan transported Jesus in some way or accomplished his temptation through a vision
 - In the end, it's doesn't much matter which way Satan worked
 - The point is, that Jesus is now confronting a different set of circumstances
 - Specifically, Jesus is standing on the pinnacle of the temple
 - The word "pinnacle" refers to the highest point of the structure

- And the highest point of the temple is the southeast corner of the city walls
- The SE corner of the city wall is also the SE corner of the temple compound, and it's the highest place of the temple
- From that place, you look down on the rocks of the Kidron Valley, about 170 ft below
 - A fall from that place would certainly be fatal
 - And from this vantage point, Satan tempts Jesus using the same basic method we've outlined already
- First, Satan questions Jesus' identity again, asking "If You are the Son of God..."
 - Notice, the question itself presumes that Jesus is the Son of God
 - Satan never asks this question of anyone else, because he knows Jesus is the Son of God
 - Remember, the goal isn't to verify Jesus' identity...it's to get Jesus to disobey the Father
 - So, because Satan knows Jesus is the Son of God, he's intent on tempting Jesus to sin
 - Likewise, it's because you are a child of God that Satan wants to tempt you, for this is how he steals God's glory
 - So Satan questions the trustworthiness of God's Word and then proposes another test to verify Jesus' identity
 - In the first temptation, Satan challenged Jesus to perform a miracle that would demonstrate Jesus was divine
 - So Satan was testing Jesus
 - But now, Satan challenges the Father Himself to prove Jesus is His Son
 - Satan quotes from Psalm 91, but as he always does, Satan misquoted and misapplied the Word to suit his own desires
 - Let's read the passage from where Satan takes this quote

Psa. 91:11 For He will give His angels charge concerning you,
To guard you in all your ways.

Psa. 91:12 They will bear you up in their hands,
That you do not strike your foot against a stone.

Psa. 91:13 You will tread upon the lion and cobra,
The young lion and the serpent you will trample down.

Psa. 91:14 "Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him;
I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name.

- This psalm makes general promises to God's people, but it makes specific promises to the Messiah, so we understand it to be a Messianic prophecy
- The Father promises to give His angels charge over the Messiah when He comes, protecting Him as He goes about His mission
- To put it simply, Jesus came to earth to die a sacrificial death on a cross during Passover, which meant
 - He couldn't die in an ox cart accident
 - Or by drowning as a child or from a disease
- So in Psalm 91, the Father promised that no harm would prevent Jesus from fulfilling His mission
 - Specifically, in v.11, the Father promises that the angels would guard Jesus in all His ways
 - And in v.12, that they would not even allow Jesus to fall from stumbling on a stone
- Of course, Satan twisted this promise in a subtle way
 - Satan suggests that the Father is promising Jesus that He can't be hurt under any circumstances
 - So Satan proposes that we test the Father's promise
 - If you throw yourself off this wall and the angels catch you, then it's proof that you are the One the Father was speaking about in Psalm 91
 - Satan's deception is taking God's Word out of context so that it lacks important details

- Notice in v.14, the psalm says Jesus will be delivered from harm *because* Jesus has loved the Father
- And loving the Father is defined in Scripture as obedience to God's Word

1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

- And that's the key...Jesus was to be protected because He honors the Father in faithfulness to the mission
 - Because Jesus obeys the Father, the Father responds by protecting Jesus
 - Not only from the dangers of everyday life, but ultimately, from rescuing Jesus from the grave
 - Conversely, had Jesus not been faithful to obey the Father, the Father would not have been obligated to protect Jesus
- The Word Satan quoted was true, but the way Satan attempted to apply it was false, because it called upon Jesus to challenge God's authority
 - By jumping off the wall, Jesus would be dictating the timing and circumstances under which the Father must fulfill His Own Word
 - The Father had a specific fulfillment in mind for the words of Psalm 91
 - And we can be sure the Father *didn't* have this situation in mind
- He was speaking about protecting Christ from His enemies and from the by-and-by dangers of life on earth
 - He wasn't giving Jesus carte blanche to throw Himself in harm's way to force God to respond
 - That's turning God into a genie, forcing Him to do our bidding
- So, had Jesus agreed to Satan's demands, Jesus would have been testing God, as Jesus says in v.7
 - Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy again, where Moses told the people that they should not try to force God to prove Himself

- Israel tested God in the desert by claiming God wasn't prepared to care for their needs in desert
- They made these claims, hoping to provoke God's pride, so that God would then respond by providing them what they wanted
- The Israelites tried to demand the terms by which God would serve them, rather than their serving God
- That's testing God, and we do it all the time
 - We make bargains with God
 - We promise things to Him, if He would only do things we want
 - We treat Him as an equal, or worse, as someone we can manipulate
- That's what Satan wants Jesus to do here
 - To dictate to the Father how Psalm 91 would be fulfilled
 - And ironically, had Jesus chosen to do so, the Father would have been under no obligation whatsoever to save Jesus
 - Had Jesus jumped, He would have been acting outside the will of the Father, so Jesus would have been disobeying the Father
 - And had Jesus sinned in this way, then the promise of Psalm 91 would have been invalidated
- Now why would Jesus be tempted to do such a thing in the first place?
 - In a word, "pride" – and that's the temptation Satan is offering here: the temptation of the pride of life
 - Pride is judging ourselves more worthy of honor than we truly are, while seeking others to affirm our self view
 - It's an insidious and deceptively powerful evil working in our hearts
 - It's so dangerous because we usually can't recognize it in ourselves
 - Because we dress up our pride to look virtuous, telling ourselves our motives are selfless

- For example, we fish for compliments, but then pretend to be embarrassed when we receive them
 - We maneuver to be the center of attention at the party...then act surprised when everyone stops to listen to us
 - We conspire to receive credit for that team project at work... then look magnanimous as we give token acknowledgement to our co-workers
 - We drive slowly through the parking lot, hoping friends will admire us in our new car...but then pretend not to notice them staring
 - And in the end, we're proud of our humility
- It's all vanity, as Solomon said, and when pride rules our heart, we join Satan's team, we follow in his footsteps trying to take over from God
 - Instead of serving God, we want God to be our servant
 - We work for our desires and priorities, not God's
 - Pride makes us steal God's honor and glory, to take credit for His provision and grace by calling it hard work and talent
- That's what Satan was banking on in Jesus' case
 - Satan was hoping that by questioning if Jesus was the Son of God, Satan might give Jesus a desire to defend His reputation
 - Then, Satan quotes the word of God out of context, suggesting the Father was obligated to protect Jesus, which enflames Jesus' pride
 - All that remained was for Jesus to jump, expecting the Father to do Jesus' bidding instead of Jesus obeying the Father
 - And if that had happened, Jesus sins and all is lost
- Pride may be Satan's most powerful deception
 - Satan has used this temptation to convince millions of believers that God wants to make us rich or free us from all disease
 - That we have a RIGHT to these things, because God has PROMISED us these things in His Word

- That's the primary error of the prosperity heresy: implying that God serves us, instead of us serving God
 - You may have thought the prosperity heresy depended on greed to gain its following, and it does to an extent
 - But its principle target is our pride, the urge to make God suit our desires
- The prosperity heresy asserts that God has promised wealth to us and it will come our way if we just claim it
 - It's the same manipulation Satan tried with Psalm 91
 - Suggesting that God will show up when WE want Him to
 - That we can force God to fulfill His Word to us according to our desires and on our terms
- Scripture teaches a very different perspective on our relationship to God
 - The most common word the Scriptures use for believers is "servant", or in Greek *duolos*, which literally means "slave"
 - Believers in Jesus Christ have been bought, redeemed, with a heavy price: Jesus' blood

1Cor. 6:20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

- So having been purchased, we have an obligation to glorify God with our body, with our lives
- That means we must silence that part of our sin nature that keeps telling us that we have equal standing with God
 - We have no right to anything apart from what the Lord has determined we should have, whether possessions, honor, power, or whatever
 - Listen to Jesus' instructions to His disciples

Luke 17:7 "Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'?"

Luke 17:8 "But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'?"

[Luke 17:9](#) "He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he?"

[Luke 17:10](#) "So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'"

- That's the Godly perspective, a humble perspective that sees ourselves in a realistic light
 - It's the heart that knows God alone is worthy of glory and honor
 - He alone deserves praise, and whatever we have to offer the world, if it's worth anything, comes from God Himself
 - And so our spiritual service of worship is to make ourselves a living sacrifice of praise
- So Satan has attempted to tempt Jesus using the lust of His flesh and the pride of life
 - He's attempted to challenge Jesus' power and to challenge the Father's promises
 - In both cases, Satan twisted a truth found in God's Word to make a claim that Scripture itself does not make
 - And in both cases, Jesus answered Satan's lie with the true view of Scripture
 - Before we look at Satan's third temptation, take note of something important in these exchanges
 - Satan has been making claims from Scripture, either implicitly or explicitly
 - And then Jesus has been answering these claims also using Scripture
 - Now if we didn't know better, we might think that Scripture contradicts itself
 - That whoever has the best verse or the last word "wins" the debate
 - But that's never true, because Scripture never contradicts itself

- So if we think two verses are arguing opposite conclusions, it means we don't understand one or the other
 - In this case, Satan misused Scripture making it appear to say something it didn't
 - And many times, the so-called "contradictions" or "tensions" in Scripture are actually self-imposed
 - We've caused it because we aren't interpreting Scripture properly somewhere
- So let's move to the final temptation

[Matt. 4:8](#) Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory;

[Matt. 4:9](#) and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me."

[Matt. 4:10](#) Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'"

[Matt. 4:11](#) Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.

- For his final temptation, Satan again moves Jesus (or gives Him a vision) from a very high mountain
 - Traditionally, people say this mountain is the one next to Jericho, probably because it's the highest mountain in the wilderness of Judea
 - From this high point, Satan gives Jesus a vision of the all the kingdoms of the world
 - And he tells Jesus it's within Satan's power to give these to Jesus if Jesus would worship Satan as god
 - Satan's mention of "kingdoms" referred to all the physical earth
 - Satan is, for a while, the prince of the fallen world, as Paul says in Ephesians 2
 - And Satan is the ruler of the world forces of darkness, as Paul says in Ephesians 6
 - Notice what Satan says to God in Job

[Job 1:6](#) Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.

[Job 1:7](#) The Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."

- Satan was roaming about on the earth, because this is his home for a time
- And therefore, he can give portions of this world to those as he desires
- He rules the hearts of unbelievers, and he has authority and dominion to hand out to those whom he pleases
 - It's no surprise that many of the world's most evil people are those with great power, wealth and success
 - Satan is the god of this world, as Paul calls him, and he empowers those who worship him
- So now, Satan is pressing Jesus to do the same, to acknowledge Satan as God, rather than His Father in Heaven
 - In a sense, Satan was offering Jesus the opportunity to reach His mission the easy way
 - Jesus came to earth as a man to redeem the fallen world from Satan
 - God gave dominion of the earth to Adam and Woman
 - But when they fell to Satan's temptations, they gave Satan glory as their god, making themselves slaves to sin
 - So now, Jesus as our New Adam, has come to redeem the world from this curse by His blood shed on the cross
 - That plan requires Jesus to die a painful death on a cross
 - Enduring the shame to pay for Adam's mistake and the sin of all who have followed Adam
 - When Jesus completes this plan, He will receive an inheritance, the Bible says
 - The Father has promised Jesus an inheritance of the entire earth,

- But like any inheritance, it can only be received upon a death
 - We can't receive our rich uncle's inheritance until after he dies
 - Jesus' death was required before His inheritance was available
 - Jesus redeemed the Creation from Satan by His death
 - And Jesus was resurrected to receive back His Own inheritance, which he gladly shares with the children of God
 - All believers share in Christ's inheritance, which we receive when we too are resurrected
 - Our share of Christ's inheritance is a portion of the world, a portion of the Kingdom Jesus sets up on earth upon His return
- But here's Satan offering Jesus a shortcut to getting His inheritance
 - Jesus could have all the kingdoms of the world if he would just worship Satan instead of the Father
 - Had Jesus done so, He could have avoided the cross, or at least that's what Satan is proposing
 - Jesus could have received His inheritance without the need to die a painful death
 - Of course, like everything Satan says, it's a lie
 - Yes, Satan could have given Jesus the world of kingdoms to rule for a time
 - But it would not have been an eternal Kingdom
 - Jesus could have ruled over the world Satan gave Jesus only for as long as Satan Himself had authority over the world
 - But one day, Satan will lose his authority over the world
 - The Bible promises that Satan will be cut down in a day to come

Ezek. 28:19 "All who know you among the peoples

Are appalled at you;

You have become terrified

And you will cease to be forever."''''

- So Satan couldn't offer Jesus what the Father was willing to give His Son if He obeyed
- The Father offered His Son an eternal Kingdom

Psa. 45:6 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;

A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

Psa. 45:7 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;

Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You

With the oil of joy above Your fellows.

Psa. 145:13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,

And Your dominion endures throughout all generations.

- Satan simply can't give Jesus an everlasting Kingdom because Satan himself isn't everlasting
- But by taking Jesus to the top of a mountain, Satan hoped to provoke a lust of the eyes in Jesus
- And by that lust, Jesus might try to gain that Kingdom in a way that brought glory to Satan, instead of the Father
- If the pride of life is the most powerful temptation we face, I think the lust of the eyes is the most common
 - The lust of the eyes is that sinful desire to have things that we aren't supposed to have
 - Or to obtain legitimate things by illegitimate means
 - Don't we all know that feeling too well?
 - We want that shiny object, but we don't want to ask the Lord to grant it to us, or even ask if we should have it
 - We don't ask, probably because we're afraid His answer will be "No"
 - And we're so captivated by the desire, we can't walk away
 - Or we aren't willing to wait for it to come in God's timing, so we try to gain it our own way

- The lust of the eyes leads to things like materialism, debt, fraud, deceit, bankruptcy
- In short, it leads us to sin
- And in this case, Satan was hoping that Jesus' desire for instant gratification and avoiding the cross might lead Him to sin
 - Satan twisted the Father's promise to give Jesus a Kingdom by implying Satan could offer the same thing
 - And then, he tempted Jesus into obtaining that promise in an easier way
- Jesus responded once more from Deuteronomy, declaring that we worship and serve the Lord alone
 - Jesus' answer is self-explanatory
 - But it reinforces something we've said multiple times during this study: worshiping God means obeying God
 - There is no way around it...we can't claim to love and worship our Lord, while simultaneously giving Satan glory by following his temptations
 - The one you obey is the one you glorify
- But there are no shortcuts in our obedience to God
 - Either we do what the Lord asks, according to His timing and in keeping with His instructions, or else we sin
 - Satan will often tell us that obeying God will mean giving up something fun, something we'll miss
 - And it does mean forgoing a lustful desire that's pulling us in the opposite direction
 - But it's just another lie...because in eternity, we're going to realize that obedience was our path to better things
 - But when we allow the desires of this world to distract us from obeying God, it produces less joy, less peace, less satisfaction
 - We don't have to wait until we reach Heaven to understand these things

- Notice how Jesus brought this encounter to an end
 - In v.10, Jesus told Satan to go away
 - And as Jesus did, Satan fled and angels came to comfort Jesus
- Remember, Jesus fought Satan the same way we can fight Him, in the strength of our convictions, while resting on the truth of God's word
 - And despite Satan's wisdom and authority, His power over us is limited
 - Scripture says Satan can subject us to trials and he can bring temptations
 - But if we resist his schemes, he flees from us

James 4:7 Submit therefore to God. **Resist** the devil and he will flee from you.

- The promise of Scripture is that if we resist him and his efforts to tempt us, he has no option but to look elsewhere for his victims
- Just as he fled Jesus
- Isn't that remarkable? As powerful as Satan is and as crafty as he is, nevertheless, he depends on us cooperating with him if he's going to succeed
 - He can only accomplish what we allow him to accomplish in our lives
 - We'll certainly feel the effect of his efforts, both trials and temptations
 - But in the end, if we resist the temptations and endure in the trials, he will give up and leave us – at least for a time
- Consider what Peter says

1 Pet. 5:8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

1 Pet. 5:9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

1 Pet. 5:10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

- Peter says appreciate and respect the power of the enemy as our adversary...don't underestimate him
 - But resistance is all that's required to defeat his schemes
 - We don't need witch doctors, incantations, we don't have to wear garlic around our necks or any such thing
 - Just don't buy his lies, and don't give in to the temptations he brings
- Which means that temptations are resistible
 - Don't ever say the devil made me do it, because he doesn't have the power to do that!
 - You can say no to your desires, and the Spirit living in you is more than capable of giving you the strength
 - Just resist the enemy's efforts by remaining firm in your faith, and he can't get his way
- Then Peter adds, keep an eternal perspective on all this...live with eyes for eternity, understand what's really going on here
 - Our battle with the enemy is one that started long before we came along
 - As Peter says, we're experiencing the same suffering the brethren have always known in the world
 - It's part of following the Lord, of being His ambassadors to the fallen world
 - But after we have suffered for a little while, we'll be called into Christ's glory and all this will be behind us
 - So resist, be on alert, remain patient, and look forward to your eternal reward
 - In all these things, we are being like Christ, for He too experienced the temptations of Satan
 - And Christ certainly knew suffering
 - Only Christ suffered without cause, for our sake, so that in the end we would have this victory over the enemy

- Satan flees when we resist because he can't win, because he's already defeated
- Let's give Christ the glory of our obedience by learning to follow Jesus' example