

Encountering Jesus

Temptation

February 26, 2023

Overarching Theme: 2023 – Living the Dream

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point: 2023 can be a year of living the dream of faithful discipleship as we take a step forward in following Jesus Christ.

Reflect on this Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11 (NRSV):

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. ³The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶saying 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 dash your foot against a stone.' " ⁷Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' "

⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; ⁹and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.' "

¹¹Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Commentary:

Jesus came from Galilee for the purpose of being baptized (3:13), and now he is led by the Spirit to be tempted. All is part of the divine plan, and his submission to temptation is not an accident or a matter of being victimized by demonic power, but is part of his obedience to God.

The period of forty days and forty nights is reminiscent of Moses (Exod 34:28; Deut 9:9). The story also has overtones of the experience of Israel, the "son of God (Exod 4:22-23, Deut 8:2-5), who passed through the waters into the wilderness, was tested – and failed, because of disobedience and worshipping other gods. Jesus, the true Son of God, who summarizes Israel's experience in coming out of Egypt (Matt 2:15), is tested in the wilderness and remains obedient

to God, specifically refusing to worship another. In contrast to Israel in the wilderness, whose faith wavered until it was restored by the miraculous manna, Jesus is hungry but remains faithful without a miracle.

Through each temptation, Jesus responds with the words of Scripture, each time from Deuteronomy (4:2, 6:16, 6:13). Jesus' words and deeds will later be seen in the vital importance of providing food for hungry people, remaining obedient to God instead of seeking fame, and worshipping only God instead of pursuing power.

The passage ends with angels caring for Jesus. By placing the kingdom of God first, even though it meant rejecting food and the help of angels, Jesus finally receives both, thus becoming an anticipatory example of his own teaching.

~adapted The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, Vol XIII, pp. 163-4.

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Just like Jesus, we are faced with temptations almost daily. Think of times you may have faced temptations similar to those Jesus faced. How did you respond when tempted by:
 - a. the promise of food – excess or absence
 - b. the promise of divine protection
 - c. the promise of abundant power
2. In looking at temptations you have overcome, does that moment become a memory that lays the groundwork for future decisions?
3. Who cares for you when you confront a temptation – who are your angels?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week:
⁴But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' . . .
⁷Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' . . .
¹⁰Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him. . . . (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).