**Slide 1**

Welcome back to the gospel of Luke. We’ve committed to reading it through in its entirety during this coming year. And today we enter chapter 4, a very pivotal passage that cements the answer to two very important questions: How will Jesus go about accomplishing his mission? And, who is he again?

So far, we have seen Luke drive home the message that Jesus is the Son of God. We saw it in the Christmas story, we saw it last week at his baptism. Luke wants you to know that this Jesus is not just another human, although he is that as well, but he is divine. He is God himself enfleshed. Both the humanity and divinity of Jesus are highlighted in this week’s passage, his temptation in the wilderness. Let’s read chapter 4 verse 1:

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**Jesus returned from the Jordan full of the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. There he was tempted for forty days by the devil. He ate nothing during those days and afterwards Jesus was starving.**

Notice how Luke lingers on the Holy Spirit. Jesus is filled with and directed by the Holy Spirit. And where does this lead him? Into the wilderness, face-to-face with Satan. The Spirit leads Jesus into battle with the devil.

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Where do you think the Spirit leads you and I? Jesus is in the wilderness for how long? 40 days. Circle that number there and in the margin, you can write “Israel”.

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We know from the Old Testament that God’s people wandered in the desert for 40 years! And in that time, their faith was tested. So now Jesus takes on the role not only as God’s son, but also as a representative of God’s people. And now, before he performs any miracle or teaches one word, he too will be tested. He ate nothing and as a good doctor Luke points out the symptoms…Jesus was starving. An obvious detail, but so important…Jesus was human!

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He had a stomach that growled, he had a body that needed food, he had waning energy levels, headaches and injuries, stubbed toes and hammered thumbs. I know if I skip lunch, I get hangry and irritable and I certainly would be in no position to face off with Satan.

Satan speaks directly to Jesus’ humanity…verse 3:

**The devil said to him, “Since you are God’s Son, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.”**

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Most translations will use the word “if” here…If you are God’s Son, you should relieve your own suffering, right? It’s actually a pretty absurd question. How can it be that God’s Son is hungry? How can it be that he is in need or suffering in any way? This is Satan’s point.

Jesus replies with the words of Deuteronomy 8:3:

**People won’t live only by bread.**

Jesus is determined to rely upon His Heavenly Father alone. He could easily provide bread, we will see him do exactly that for 5,000 people, but he is here to die to himself. In fact the Israelites had a name for the Wilderness. They called it “Jeshimmon” which means devastation...we can think of it as a place God uses to kill the flesh.

**Next the devil led him to a high place and showed him in a single instant all the kingdoms of the world. The devil said, “I will give you this whole domain and the glory of all these kingdoms. It’s been entrusted to me and I can give it to anyone I want. Therefore, if you will worship me, it will all be yours.”**

**Slide 7**

Here Satan challenges Jesus’ status. “You were supposedly born the King of kings, right? What kind of king has no kingdom? Look what I can offer you.” Can you imagine….Jesus who has known the throne of heaven. Jesus who has experienced unending glory from unending choirs of angels…wouldn’t it be nice to have just a little bit of honor and glory from someone, anyone!

But again Jesus recited Deuteronomy:

**It is written, “You will worship the Lord your God and serve only him.”**

Jesus stands strong again. He will not grab for honor and power but is determined to honor only his heavenly Father. So Satan has one more scheme up his sleeve:

**The devil brought him into Jerusalem and stood him at the highest point of the temple. He said to him, “Since you are God’s Son, throw yourself down from here.**

And Satan ups his game with a little scripture passage of his own. He quotes Psalm 91:

**For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you and they will take you up in their hands so that you won’t hit your foot on a stone.”**

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Satan is now calling God’s character into question. He is saying, “If you trust your Heavenly Father so much, then jump! Surely he will protect you!” And Jesus goes once again to Deuteronomy:

**It’s been said, “Don’t test the Lord your God.”**

Jesus is stating here, unequivocally that God’s kingdom will not be one of sensationalism.

Verse 13:

**After finishing every temptation, the devil departed from him until the next opportunity.**

Luke does not give us a clean-cut ending to the scene here. He is letting us know that Satan still has a role to play in this story. But Jesus, as Israel here remember, has overcome and been victorious where the Israelites had failed and were unfaithful. We also get the answer to our first question: How will Jesus go about completing his mission? After this account, as readers, we are now fully confident in the methods that Jesus has chosen. He has not picked the path of self-aggrandizement or glory or ease…Jesus has chosen the way of humility and suffering and death. The cross is what is in store for this King. But for now, he can get some food and begin his ministry. Verse 14:

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**Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit** (note again, Luke’s wonderful obsession with the Holy Spirit) **to Galilee, and news about him spread throughout the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.**

Jesus was gaining some notoriety.

**Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been raised. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as he normally did and stood up to read.**

So, Jesus is back home in his small town, a place where everybody knows everybody. He stands to read which would have been completely normal as all men were able to do so. They would then offer some insight or questions about the passage read. Jesus may have been a sort of a guest Rabbi at this point as he had some notoriety, but we just don’t know for sure.

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**The synagogue assistant gave him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:**

**“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”**

**He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue attendant, and sat down.**

All totally normal. Rabbis would read the sacred words while standing and then sit when they were teaching.

**Slide 13**

**Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on him. He began to explain to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it.” Everyone was raving about Jesus, so impressed were they by the gracious words flowing from his lips.**

We need to note here that the Jewish people have this long history of prophets who spoke God’s word. But it has now been hundreds of years since God had spoken. John the Baptist came as the voice of the Lord, but he weas now in prison and people were not quite sure what to make of him and now Jesus reads this crucial passage from Isaiah, a passage that describes the person and work of the long-awaited Jewish messiah, a passage of hope and victory, and here Jesus proclaims it as God’s word for today, now in this moment? It’s exciting, it’s life changing, the fulfillment of hope! But wait a minute…the end of verse 22…

**They said, “This is Joseph’s son isn’t it?”**

**Slide 14**

In other words, there is no way the exalted Messiah could possibly be a lowly carpenter. There is no honor in that!

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**The Jesus said to them, “Undoubtedly, you will quote this saying to me: ‘Doctor, heal yourself. Do here in your hometown what we’ve heard you do in Capernaum.’”**

So, Jesus had been active in Capernaum already and word had spread about what he had done. See Matthew and Mark put this event at a later time in Jesus’ ministry. See Matthew 13:54 and Mark 6:1 Write in your margin “Out of Order”. But Luke’s priority is to cement Jesus’ identity, not so much keep accurate chronology in this case. Jesus sort of puts words in the mouth of the crowd by quoting a proverb that, as a physician, probably hit Luke a little differently than it does us. “Doctor, heal yourself”, in other words, prove yourself. Do the things we have heard about. Another temptation. Jesus goes on to make things worse:

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**He said: ‘I assure you that no prophet is welcome in the prophet’s hometown. And I can assure you that there were many widows in Israel during Elijah’s time, when it didn’t rain for three and a half years and there as a great food shortage in the land. Yet Elijah was sent to none of them but only to a widow in the city of Zarephath is the region of Sidon. There were also many persons with skin diseases in Israel during the time of the prophet Elisha, but none of them were cleansed. Instead Naaman the Syrian was cleansed.” When they heard this, everyone in the synagogue was filled with anger. They rose up and ran him out of town. They led him to the crest of the hill on which their town had been built so that they could throw him off the cliff.**

Well, that took a turn. People were impressed with Jesus and had heard good things about him and here he was before them, proclaiming that today he himself was the Messiah chosen by God to save his people! But there is a major problem…Jesus had the wrong definition of who God’s people are. Jesus has highlighted two stories from the Old Testament, one about Elijah and one about Elisha, two powerhouse prophets.

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Yet these are two problem passages, because in them, God’s blessing is being poured out upon Gentiles. The Sidonian widow and Naaman the Syrian are both personally helped by the prophets. And yet they do not belong as part of God’s people! These stories did not make sense to the Jewish mindset… they were stories that the people would have like to discount and forget about. But here is Jesus identifying as the Messiah and then bringing up these troublesome accounts of God relating to Gentiles. It was just too much! It was blasphemy! The congregation became so frenzied that they decided not to run Jesu out of town but to kill him and be done with it! But, if they could have remained calm, these Jewish people would have seen that their complaint is not with Jesus, so much as with their own Scriptures! Jesus only recounted what the Bible says! And Luke uses the story to agains prove the crux of his whole Gospel…God’s salvation is for all, Jew and Gentile alike. God extends the hand of fellowship across all racial lines to lowly Sidonian widows and to Syrian soldiers. And finally, verse 30:

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**But he passed through the crowd and went on his way.**

I’m going to be honest, I have no idea how this works. For some reason I have a picture of the crows in a dust cloud while Jesus just walk away whistling with his hands behind his back. I suspect Luke is mentioning this as the only miracle Jesus performed in his hometown. In the next section Luke has Jesus in Capernaum….remember, he went out of order. And here begins the ministry of Jesus as we more commonly think of it. So next week will kick off with the removal of a demon.

**Slide 19**

But for now we sit in gratitude that our Jesus was able to overcome and defeat every temptation. That he chose, from the outset, the way of the cross. God’s kingdom came into this world via a manger in Bethlehem, it was solidified in the wilderness called Devastation and it was personified by one man in a little Nazarene synagogue. And God went through all this trouble, this suffering, and this humiliation with more to come, for my sake and for your sake. Whether Jew or Gentile, he came to initiate relationship with humanity. Praise God!

**Slide 20**

Now for us as Jesus followers, who desire to be filled with the Spirit, we cringe to see where that path leads. Not to glory, power, wealth, and ease, but to humility, to self-denial, to the wilderness where we battle with this willful flesh. But through the power of this same Spirit and armed with the same Scriptures, we stand with Jesus in the wilderness, and we take on Satan’s best shot. This is the hard-fought way of faith; it’s the way Jesus chose.

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And know this, just like Jesus, Satan keeps his eyes open for an opportune time to tempt us in our lives. Those weak moments when we are distracted or overly tired or hungry…Can we stand with Jesus? Our temptations are actually a sign of strength. We are on the devil’s radar; we are causing havoc to the powers of this world. As we grow spiritually, temptations will actually intensify, and we will be called on to depend even more on the Spirit and surrender even more to God’s plan and be in even more need of prayer.

**Slide 22**

But remember Jesus words, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it. Can you underline that word “today”? Jesus is speaking about a very important moment in history. Today means now. It doesn’t mean tomorrow and is doesn’t mean sometime in the past. Today the Messiah has come, today is the day of salvation, today our King reigns. The “today” that Jesus proclaims is a day that will never end. Amen.