

# First Sunday in Lent

## DUELING WITH THE DEVIL

Luke 4:1-13

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#### Analysis by Paige G. Evers

1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. 3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." 4 Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" 5 Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. 7 If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." 8 Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" 9 Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, 10 for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' 11 and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" 12 Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 13 When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

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## **DIAGNOSIS: Living on Temptation Island**

### **Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem)** – *Bombarded by Lies*

The devil offered Jesus a classic “get rich quick” scheme. All you have to do is one crazy stunt, and you’ll win the cash. This sounds a lot like today’s TV Guide with its rash of reality shows. “Temptation Island,” “Joe Millionaire,” “The Apprentice,” “Fear Factor,” “Survivor,” and the list goes on. The common denominator is the temptation to win big. Watching these shows, people plug into the lie that wealth and winning are all that matters as they wonder, “How far will the characters go to get what they want?” “Who will be voted off the island?” “How will it all turn out?”

### **Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem)** – *Rumbling Stomachs*

Like Jesus after the forty days, our culture is famished. We are living in the wilderness. The voices coming from our plasma televisions seem to soothe us and ease our stress, but our hearts are still empty. We are hungry for spiritual food. The voices that promise relief, food, and wealth to fill the hole in our hearts are tempting. What the devil asks Jesus and us to do isn’t that difficult, after all. Turn a stone into bread. Cheat on our taxes just a little. Linger in the workroom with that attractive co-worker. Worship the devil. Who will find out? What can God do to stop us, anyway?

### **Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem)** – *Deep Wilderness*

When we challenge God, we turn the act of receiving God’s promise into a demand for God’s performance. The devil tells Jesus to test God and find out if he really will protect him from harm if he jumps off the top of the temple. Jesus refuses. That’s not how God operates. In the Ash Wednesday exhortation, we hear how God chooses to relate to his children: “by our sin we grieve our Father, who does not desire us to come under his

judgment, but to turn to him and live.” Following the voice of the devil and succumbing to his temptations bring us under God’s judgment. Instead of getting rich quick, we are left even deeper in the wilderness, even more famished, without hope of finding our way home.

## **PROGNOSIS: Living with the One Who Loves Us**

### **Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution)** – *The Power of the Word*

Fortunately for us, Jesus remembers the Scriptures when he faces the devil, and he relies on them to get out of the wilderness. Jesus calls on God’s Word to thwart the devil’s scheme. Jesus is “the Son of God,” as the devil states (vv. 3 & 9), and Jesus acts accordingly. He trusts God, not Satan’s empty promises, to provide in the present and to take care of the future. At this point in the story, it is not yet the right time, but eventually Jesus will give up his life. He won’t throw himself off the temple (v. 9), but he will be lifted up on the cross. Jesus will inherit all the kingdoms of the world, with all their glory and authority (v. 6), not by worshiping the devil but by obeying God to the point of death on a cross. Jesus will prepare a loaf of bread, not from a stone (v. 3), but from his own body, so that all may be filled with the bread of life.

### **Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution)** – *Food for Life*

Hearing this good news about Jesus, we can turn away from Temptation Island and all the other lures of this world, and we can set our hearts on God. Faith in our crucified and resurrected Lord gives us the strength to “worship the Lord your God, and serve only him” (v. 8). Jesus gives us the grace to “not put the Lord your God to the test” (v. 12). Jesus gives us the ability to trust that “one does not live by bread alone” (v. 4), and that God will give us what we need.

### **Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution)** – *Jesus is Lord*

Once our hearts are focused on God, we can invite others who are hungry and tempted by the devil to come into God's presence. We can show them Jesus, who loved his Father in heaven and you and me so much that nothing could sway him from his purpose of redeeming lost and hungry sinners. We can share with them that the Lord Jesus Christ argued with the devil and won, and that he did it for you. And we can live in a way that shows the world our faith in God's promises and our hope in God's power.