

The title for today's message is: **Jesus Turns Away Temptation**

Jesus said: **Do not put the Lord your God to the test**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

You are a good person, a Christian man, woman, boy, or girl. You really want to live according to God's will, because you love Jesus and you want to thank him for all he has done for you.

And you knew exactly what it was you were supposed to do, and exactly what you weren't supposed to do, yet when the time came and temptation presented itself, you chose temptation over the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, every time you look back you kick yourself for being so weak and so foolish.

You know that Jesus died for your sins and that you are forgiven, and you'd rather not be committing any sins in the first place. You know this! Right?

Yes, you want to stop giving into temptation. Well, our Gospel lesson today has a message for everyone who struggles with temptation.

For those who lose the big battles, and for those who lose the little ones, and for those who fail frequently and for those who, well, that would be all of us, wouldn't it?

Now, every one of Satan's temptations here in our text was in essence just an attempt to get Jesus to stop trusting His Father in heaven.

Satan said: **“Tell this stone to become bread”**, here he was trying to get Jesus to basically tell his Father, “It’s obvious you can’t, or won’t take care of me.

I need to eat, so I guess I’m going to have to take care of myself.” Then Satan said to Jesus: **“Worship me,”** this was a bald-faced attempt by the devil to get the recognition and position he so desired.

But it was even more a temptation for Jesus to throw away his trust in his Father and their plan of salvation, in favor of an “easier” way to win the world.

And finally Satan said: **“Throw yourself down”** this was a temptation to abuse his trust in God. It would have been the exact opposite of a “leap of faith”, if Jesus had jumped it would have been a challenge to, or a test of, God’s truthfulness.

Now it may seem a little funny to say that Jesus, who after all is God, was successful in resisting temptation because he trusted God. Yet, that’s what happened here.

Satan is always trying to tear the Trinity apart by setting the Son’s will against the Father’s, but it doesn’t work, because the Son’s will is the same as the Father’s will.

Here Jesus was going to complete this difficult fast, and then continue on his way to the cross to fulfill his mission.

And that’s why Satan was so intent on distracting Jesus from his work. Look, he didn’t want the Son of God to do what he had come to do, which was to save the world from sin, death, and Satan himself.

But God the Son trusted God the Father. Sure the opportunity was there to sin, to give in to the temptation and give up on his mission.

Look Jesus wouldn't do that, because the salvation of the whole world hung in the balance, and he didn't let his father nor us down.

And that's why we trust him. Not only did Jesus win a victory over the devil in the wilderness, but he also won for us the ultimate victory over sin, and death, by going to the cross.

Every sin of every man, woman, and child was paid for in full when he gave his life, and poured out his blood on the cross.

And with his resurrection on Easter Sunday he gave a guarantee of eternal life to everyone who puts his or her trust in him.

My friends, victory is ours in Jesus Christ, and with our fear of death destroyed, we can truly live for Christ.

Now, the only power Satan has over us is the power we give him when we give into his temptations.

And this is why we gladly put our trust in Jesus for all things and at all times, we don't ever want to give the devil a foothold, because we don't want to sin.

Look, we know what happens when we put our trust in ourselves to always do the right thing, we don't. We can't. We fail.

But when we trust in Christ and his victory, we find forgiveness for every temptation we give into.

And every sin we embrace, we find in Jesus the strength and wisdom to do what we cannot do on our own.

Simply put, trust the Lord when you're tempted! Now there's another thing worth noting here while we're talking about trust:

Jesus never used his divine power to put an end to Satan's temptations, he responded as any believer would responded, with the Word of God.

Now, there's a lesson here for those who get hung up on the idea of spiritual power, and think that if they can just tap into the power of God.

Satan would be out of their lives forever, and the Christian life would be a breeze. But, not only is that not how Christ told us to fight the devil, it's not even how he himself fought him.

Instead, Jesus makes it clear that we don't need to have any "special powers" in order to resist and rebuke Satan.

But remember when your being attacked? It's not always clear, that's why its very important to recognize it for what it is.

Now obviously, few Christians are going to be taken in by the devil if he comes to us and says, "Hey, why don't you turn your back on God and break a commandment, or ten?"

Look, temptations so direct, are pretty easily rejected because it's so clear what they are and what giving into them will mean.

Now, there was no doubt who was going to win in the contest between Jesus and Satan, yet the temptations Jesus faced were serious, and should neither be minimized, nor ignored.

And Christians sometimes get blindsided by such "stupid" temptations all because they don't take them seriously enough.

You think, “Oh, I’ll never have to worry about that!” and the next thing you know you’ve fallen into temptation.

My friends, Satan messes with our minds so recognize it when he does. Lets look at the two temptations here that start off with the words, **“If you are the Son of God”**,

Now, does what follows have any real connection to Jesus’ divinity? Why would being the true Son of God mean that he has to give into his hunger and make stones into bread?

Why would it mean that he should jump off the roof of the temple? And with us, Satan cleverly connects things that have no connection and separates things that shouldn’t be separated.

Most temptations don’t even make sense, but still we fall for them, because we’re not prepared for them, or just because our sinful natures get the best of us, and we want to fall for them.

Maybe some of the following statements are familiar to you: “Well, if you really love him, then you’ll sleep with him.”

“You’ve been working so hard, if anybody’s earned the right to go out and get drunk tonight, it’s you.”

“You really need to get out and get some fresh air and exercise, you have responsibilities, and you’re usually so busy.

Or, God will understand if you don’t make it to church.” Would you recognize these temptations for what they are when they come?

The fact that we too often give into these and other temptations reminds us again of our need for the gospel, and for the forgiveness that we find there.

And for the strength and wisdom it gives us to recognize and stand firm against Satan's temptations.

Now there is yet one more message we need to take away as we consider how Jesus turns away temptation, and that is "Never surrender."

Look, Satan wasn't giving up here, no he was going to keep on tempting, testing, and trying Jesus.

The constant barrage of temptations reached its peak in the Garden of Gethsemane, and even as Jesus hangs on the cross.

We hear Satan's voice again in the mockers' words, "If you are the Christ of God, come down from the cross and save yourself."

But even then, in the midst of his greatest pain and suffering, Jesus wouldn't give in, no there was too much at stake, our final victory was at hand.

So for us here today, let us not forget that Satan has no intention of ending his attacks on us, its something he'll keep doing until the end.

He wants us to give into temptation, so he can steal us away from God and enslave us again to sin.

And that's why we are so thankful that Jesus already won the victory for us. The battles may go on, but the outcome of the war is already decided: Jesus won, Satan lost.

And since everything Jesus did, he did in our place, we too can also say: We won, Satan lost.

And with the victory already won, surrender would be quite silly, wouldn't it? Sure, there will still be struggles with Satan, big and small.

Some we will win, with God's help, and others we will lose, trying on our own, but the fact that temptations continue doesn't mean the victory is in doubt.

It just means that we need to look more and more to Christ, the One who beat the devil in the wilderness and defeated him on the cross, once and for all.

So, as Jesus turns away temptation, so do we. We trust him when it comes, we use his Word to fight it, we recognize it for what it is, and we never surrender.

That's how we handle the struggle with temptation. Turn away from it, and turn to Christ. Trust in him, and you will never be put to shame.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.