Matthew chapter 4

MATTHEW 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry afterward. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him into the holy city. He set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge concerning you.' and, 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you don't dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus said to him, "Again, it is written, 'You shall not test the Lord, your God.'"

Again, the devil took him to an exceedingly high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory. He said to him, "I will give you all of these things, if you will fall down and worship me."

Then Jesus said to him, "Get behind me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'"

Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and served him.

The first event in our Lord's ministry which Matthew records after His baptism, is His temptation. This is a deep and mysterious subject. There is much in the history of it which we cannot explain. But there lie on the face of the history plain practical lessons, to which we shall do well to take heed.

Let us learn in the first place, what a real and mighty enemy we have in the devil. He is not afraid to assault even the Lord Jesus Himself. Three times over he attacks God's own Son. Our Savior was "tempted by the devil." It was the devil who brought sin into the world at the beginning. This is he, who vexed Job, deceived David, and gave Peter a heavy fall. This is he, whom the Bible calls a "murderer," a "liar," and a "roaring lion." This is he, whose enmity to our souls never slumbers and never sleeps. This is he, who for nearly 6000 years has been working at one work--to ruin men and women, and draw them to hell. This is he, whose cunning and subtlety pass man's understanding, and who often appears as "an angel of light."

Let us all watch and pray daily against his devices. There is no enemy worse than an enemy who is never seen and never dies, who is near to us wherever we live, and goes with us wherever we go. Not least let us beware of that levity and jesting about the devil, which is so unhappily common. Let us remember every day, that if we would be saved, we must not only crucify the flesh, and overcome the world, but also "resist the devil."

Let us learn in the next place, that the chief weapon we ought to use in resisting Satan is the Bible. Three times the great enemy offered temptations to our Lord. Three times his offer was refused, with a text of Scripture as the reason, "it is written."

Here is one among many reasons, why we ought to be diligent readers of our Bibles. The Word is the sword of
the Spirit. We shall never fight a good fight, if we do not use it as our principal weapon. The Word is the lamp for our feet. We shall never keep the king's highway to heaven, if we do not journey by its light. It may well be feared, that there is not enough Bible-reading among us. It is not sufficient to have the Book. We must actually read it, and pray over it ourselves. It will do us no good, if it only lies still in our houses. We must be actually familiar with its contents, and have its texts stored in our memories and minds. Knowledge of the Bible never comes by intuition. It can only be obtained by diligent, regular, daily, attentive, wakeful reading. Do we grudge the time and trouble this will cost us? If we do, we are not yet fit for the kingdom of God.

Let us learn in the last place, what a sympathizing Savior the Lord Jesus Christ is. "In that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted." (Heb. 2:18.)

The sympathy of Jesus is a truth which ought to be peculiarly dear to all believers. They will find in it a mine of strong consolation. They should never forget, that they have a mighty Friend in heaven, who feels for them in all their temptations, and can enter into all their spiritual anxieties. Are they ever tempted by Satan to distrust God's care and goodness? So was Jesus. Are they ever tempted to presume on God's mercy, and run into danger without warrant? So also was Jesus. Are they ever tempted to commit some one great private sin for the sake of some great seeming advantage? So also was Jesus. Are they ever tempted to listen to some misapplication of Scripture, as an excuse for doing wrong? So also was Jesus. He is just the Savior that a tempted people require. Let them flee to Him for help, and spread before Him all their troubles. They will find His ear ever ready to hear, and His heart ever ready to feel He can understand their sorrows.

May we all know the value of a sympathizing Savior by experience! There is nothing to be compared to it in this cold and deceitful world. Those who seek their happiness in this life only, and despise the religion of the Bible, have no idea what true comfort they are missing.

MATTHEW 4:12-25

Now when Jesus heard that John was delivered up, he withdrew into Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he came and lived in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sat in darkness saw a great light, to those who sat in the region and shadow of death, to them light has dawned."

From that time, Jesus began to preach, and to say, "Repent! For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers: Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers for men."

They immediately left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them. They immediately left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness among the people. The report about him went out into all Syria. They brought to him all who were sick, afflicted with various diseases and torments, possessed with demons, epileptics, and paralytics; and he healed them. Great multitudes from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and from beyond the Jordan followed him.

We have in these verses the beginning of our Lord’s ministry among men. He enters on His labors among a dark and ignorant people. He chooses men to be His companions and disciples. He confirms His ministry by miracles, which rouse the attention of "all Syria," and draw multitudes to hear Him.

Let us notice the way in which our Lord commenced His mighty work. "He began to preach." There is no office so honorable as that of the preacher. There is no work so important to the souls of men. It is an office which the Son of God was not ashamed to take up. It is an office to which He appointed His twelve apostles. It is an office to which Paul in his old age specially directs Timothy’s attention. He charges him with almost his last breath to "preach the word." It is the means which God has always been pleased to use above any other, for the conversion and edification of souls. The brightest days of the Church have been those when preaching has
been honored. The darkest days of the Church have been those when it has been lightly esteemed. Let us honor the sacraments and public prayers of the Church, and reverently use them. But let us beware that we do not place them above preaching.

Let us notice the first doctrine which the Lord Jesus proclaimed to the world. He began to say "repent!" The necessity of repentance is one of the great foundations, which lie at the very bottom of Christianity. It needs to be pressed on all mankind without exception. High or low, rich or poor, all have sinned and are guilty before God; and all must repent and be converted, if they would be saved. And true repentance is no light matter. It is a thorough change of heart about sin, a change showing itself in godly sorrow and humiliation—in heartfelt confession before the throne of grace—in a complete breaking off from sinful habits, and an abiding hatred of all sin. Such repentance is the inseparable companion of saving faith in Christ. Let us prize the doctrine highly. It is of the highest importance. No Christian teaching can be called sound, which does not constantly bring forward "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:21.)

Let us notice the class of men whom the Lord Jesus chose to be His disciples. They were of the poorest and humblest rank in life. Peter, and Andrew, and James, and John, were all "fishermen."

The religion of our Lord Jesus Christ was not intended for the rich and learned alone. It was intended for all the world—and the majority of all the world will always be the poor. Poverty and ignorance of books excluded thousands from the notice of the boastful philosophers of the heathen world. They exclude no one from the highest place in the service of Christ. Is a man humble? Does he feel his sins? Is he willing to hear Christ's voice and follow Him? If this be so, he may be the poorest of the poor, but he shall be found as high as any in the kingdom of heaven. Intellect and money are worth nothing without grace.

The religion of Christ must have been from heaven, or it never could have prospered and overspread the earth as it has done. It is vain for infidels to attempt to answer this argument. It cannot be answered. A religion which did not flatter the rich, the great, and the learned—a religion which offered no license to the carnal inclinations of man's heart—a religion whose first teachers were poor fishermen, without wealth, rank, or power—such a religion could never have turned the world upside down, if it had not been of God. Look at the Roman emperors and the heathen priests with their splendid temples on the one side! Look at a few unlearned working men with the Gospel on the other! Were there ever two parties so unequally matched? Yet the weak proved strong, and the strong proved weak. Heathenism fell, and Christianity took its place. Christianity must be of God.

Let us notice in the last place the general character of the miracles by which our Lord confirmed His mission. Here we are told of them in the mass. Hereafter we shall read many of them described particularly. And what is their character? They were miracles of mercy and kindness. Our Lord "went about doing good." These miracles are meant to teach us our Lord's power. He that could heal sick people with a touch, and cast out devils with a word, is "able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him." He is almighty.

These miracles are meant to be types and emblems of our Lord's skill as a spiritual physician. He before whom no bodily disease proved incurable, is mighty to cure every ailment of our souls. There is no broken heart that He cannot heal. There is no wound of conscience that He cannot cure. Fallen, crushed, bruised, plague-stricken as we all are by sin, Jesus by His blood and Spirit can make us whole. Only let us go to Him.

These miracles not least are intended to show us Christ's heart. He is a most compassionate Savior. He rejected no one who came to Him. He refused no one, however loathsome and diseased. He had an ear to hear all, and a hand to help all, and a heart to feel for all. There is no kindness like His. His compassions fail not.

May we all remember that Jesus is "the same yesterday, today, and forever!" High in heaven at God's right hand, He is not in the least altered. He is just as able to save, just as willing to receive, just as ready to help, as He was 1800 years ago. Would we have spread out our needs before Him then? Let us do the same now. He can "heal every disease and every sickness."