

MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE

Luke 3:21-4:4

Key Verse: 4:4

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

In today's passage, Luke records three things: the baptism of Jesus, the genealogy of Jesus, and the temptations of Jesus. Jesus was baptized by John to fulfill all righteousness. The genealogy of Jesus teaches us that Jesus came from the line of David as was promised by God a long time ago. Then Jesus was tempted as we are often tempted. He showed how we can overcome our temptations. He declared, "*Man shall not live on bread alone!*" Let us think about what this means.

First, Jesus was baptized. Look at verses 21. *When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too.* The baptism by John was "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (3:3). But Jesus did not need forgiveness. He was the only person in the world without sin. So when Jesus came to him to be baptized, John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented (Mt 3:14-15). Through his baptism, Jesus received a baton from John, symbolizing the continuity of the redemptive work of God. In other words, his baptism was the fulfillment of God's promises.

What happened when Jesus was baptized? Look at verses 21-22. *When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."* All three persons of the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit) attended the inauguration ceremony of the Messiah. This teaches us that Jesus began his Messianic ministry according to God's long-term redemptive plan. His appearance was not random; nor was it dictated by human circumstances. God was very happy that finally his long-awaited plan to save the humanity was about to be realized by Jesus. It was a historic moment for mankind.

Second, the genealogy of Jesus (23-38). The coming of Jesus as the Messiah was according to God's redemptive plan. To confirm this, Luke the historian recorded the family tree of Jesus. His genealogy of Jesus is different from Matthew's in several ways (Mt 1:1-17). Luke begins from Jesus and goes up all the way to Adam and God, while Matthew starts from Abraham and goes down to Joseph and Jesus. The two genealogies are identical from Abraham to David. However, beginning with David, the two lines diverge with all different names except for two (Shealtiel and Zerubbabel). How can the same person have two very different family trees? So some people try to use this as evidence that the Bible is not trustworthy. But they are wrong. The Jewish people were meticulous in recording their ancestry. It is inconceivable that Luke the historian and Matthew would mess up the family tree of Jesus. Bible scholars believe that Matthew traced the paternal line of Jesus, while Luke recorded his maternal line. Matthew

followed the line of Joseph, Jesus' legal father, through David's son Solomon, while Luke traced the line of Mary (Jesus' blood relative), through David's son Nathan. The two lines converge in the intermarriages of Shealtiel and Zerubbabel in the middle of the two genealogies.

Look at verse 23. *Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli,...* In Luke's genealogy that traced Jesus' family tree through his mother Mary, Joseph was the son-in-law of Heli, Mary's father. But there was no Greek word for "son-in-law." So Joseph was called the "son of Heli." The point of both genealogies, however, is that whether it is through Joseph's or Mary's line, Jesus was a descendant of David. Jesus came as the Messiah just as God promised David that he would send the Messiah through his line. Luke recorded the human genealogy of Jesus, but he believed that Jesus is the Son of God born through the miracle of virgin birth. He conveyed this in verse 23 when he said, *He was the son, "so it was thought," of Joseph.*

Third, the temptations of Jesus (4:1-4). Look at verses 1-2a. *Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.* At the beginning of his ministry Jesus was tempted by the devil. He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness for the temptations. Why did Jesus have to be tempted by Satan at the beginning of his Messianic ministry? A couple of weeks ago, two women made history by completing the U.S. Army's elite Ranger School program. It was a major breakthrough for women, showing they can be tough not only mentally but also physically. They had to survive with little food and sleep their grueling 20-hour per day training for 2 months. Only two out of five very selective men complete the program. We learned that to protect us from the enemies, our soldiers, both men and women, have to go through tough training.

Of course, Jesus wasn't preparing for a combat mission. In fact, his temptations signaled what kind of ministry he was going to do. His mission was not political or social. It was going to be a spiritual battle against Satan. He came to save us from our sins. And sin entered the world when the first man gave in to Satan's temptation and disobeyed God's word. Jesus had to stand in the very place where Adam had failed. In other words, he had to be tempted for our sake. This is what Hebrews 4:15 says: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin." When we are tempted to sin, we should remember that our Lord Jesus was also tempted and overcame the temptations. He set a good example for us to follow with regard to temptations.

So what kind of temptations do we have to overcome? One missionary said he is tempted to become self-sufficient before God. I think this is a common temptation for all of us—to think that we can do things on our own without God. Jesus said apart from him we can do nothing (Jn 15:5). Other temptations include pride, selfishness, desires for money and pleasure. Lustful desire is a temptation for many people. We occasionally hear how some school principals, teachers, and even religious leaders get in trouble with indecent photos of minors stored on their computers. How about you? Are you tempted

to click on the photos of some gorgeous woman or man while you browse the web? If so, you are not alone. I just finished a training for maintaining good working environment at SU and learned that 70% of internet traffic on porn sites happen during business hours.

Yes, we face some real temptations in our daily life. What can we do? We will learn from our Lord Jesus how to overcome temptations. But first, let us remember what the Bible says about temptations that we have to face everyday. St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:13: “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” It is not easy for us to overcome temptations. But it is not impossible. We should remember that God is right there with us, ready to help us. It is also wise not to play with fire if we don’t want to get burned. Martin Luther once said, “Don’t sit near the fire if your head is made of butter.” We also remember the famous story about St. Augustine who used to be a womanizer before his conversion. One day, he noticed his former girlfriend approaching on the street. He turned around and walked in the opposite direction to avoid the woman. He ran away from her. Surprised, she shouted, “Augustine, it is I.” But Augustine, keeping on running, shouted back to her, “Yes, but it is not I.” He was no longer the old Augustine. The new Augustine did not play with matches around the fire.

Now look at verse 3. *The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”* The first temptation of Jesus was about bread. What was his physical condition when the devil approached him? Verse 2 says that he ate nothing for 40 days, and he was hungry. What an understatement! If we skip a meal, we feel hungry. After 40 days of not eating anything, we would be beyond hungry. We would eat anything, bugs, grass, tree barks, human flesh, ... you name it. Jesus is God but he was fully human when he walked on earth. He was hungry for sure. At this vulnerable moment, the devil said to Jesus, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” Now if the devil said this to me, it wouldn’t be a temptation, because I cannot turn stone into bread. But to Jesus it was, because he could do that easily. The devil tempted him to use his divine power to satisfy his own physical needs. He wanted Jesus to use his power for his selfish purpose.

We are tempted with our bread problem on a daily basis. This is a temptation for all human beings. The devil whispers in our ears, “You need money to survive. You need to have nice things to be happy.” When this temptation comes, most people, both young and old, become anxious until they become slaves of anxiety. I remember how even a missionary became paralyzed for a while with fear of uncertainty when he lost his well-paying job. Why is the temptation for bread so strong? The desire for food is an animal instinct. We are told that the ring-tailed monkey in Africa is so agile that it is not easy to catch one. But to the Zulus who know the monkey well, it is very simple. They know that the seeds of a particular melon is a favorite food of the monkey. So they make a hole in the melon, just large enough for the monkey to insert his hand to reach for the seeds. The monkey will stick his hand in, grab a handful of seeds and try to take the hand out. But he cannot do it, because his fist is now too big with the seeds which he would not let go. He tries and tries, until the Zulus come and catch him.

So how can we overcome this strong desire for bread? How did Jesus answer the devil? Let us read verse 4. *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'" Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3 which says, "... man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."* Jesus' answer teaches us that we are not only a physical being but also a spiritual being. We are both a body and a soul. Our body is flesh, made out of the dust of the ground. At the same time, we are made in the image of God (Ge 1:27). So we are a soul. Thus, we need not only physical bread to satisfy our physical needs, but also spiritual food to satisfy our soul. The problem is that it is easy for us to ignore the spiritual needs living in this material-oriented society. But we must remember that while our body is mortal, our soul is immortal. We need to nurture our soul.

In this world, we are taught to think that if we have enough money, we would be happy. But we know plenty of rich people who are unhappy. They have big emptiness in their hearts that no amount of money can fill. Jesus told the following story to make this point. A rich landowner had an abundant harvest one year. He had so much grain that he ran out storage. So he decided to build bigger barns. In today's terms, this is like landing on a lucrative job or contract, or hitting a jackpot in the stock market. The rich man said to himself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." This is the idea many people have today about money. They want to have enough money so that they can retire early in Florida and hit the beach everyday. But do you know what God said to the rich man? God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" (Lk 12:20). This world teaches us to be fools. We are programmed and brainwashed to make money by any means, even turning stones into bread, if that were possible. But Jesus says that we shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Of course, Jesus knows that we need bread. He told us to pray for our daily bread in the Lord's Prayer. But he says that we shall not live on bread alone. We need more than bread. We need more than things of this world. We need the word of God. The word of God is the bread of life that gives us eternal life. In fact, Jesus is the bread of life. Jesus is the answer to our bread problem. In John 6:35, Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." Jesus gave us the promise that if we seek first his kingdom and righteousness, he will give us all we need (Mt 6:33). In the course of our lives, we make many small and big decisions. Many of such decisions are involved with the bread problem. Satan tempts us to give top priority to the problem in our decision making. I pray that God may help us to make each decision by faith in Jesus and with consultation with the word of God. Jesus said, "Man shall not live on bread alone."

In conclusion, we shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Just as we need food to sustain our body, we need our spiritual bread to sustain our spirit. We need the word of God to nurture our spiritual life. May the Lord help us to come to the word of God everyday and live by the word of God!