

WILDERNESS VICTORY

MATTHEW 4.1-11



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

T . M . M O O R E

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Wilderness Victory: Matthew 4.1-11
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Matthew 4.1-11: Introduction

In the wilderness, Jesus accomplished His first – and a decisive – victory over the devil. Through three temptations, Jesus showed His firm reliance on the Word of God. He had come on a mission to bring near the Kingdom of God, and not even Satan’s best punches would keep Him from succeeding.

At the end of the contest, Satan is battered, beaten, and bound by the Word of God. There is much for us to learn from this encounter.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Life in the Wilderness

Pray Psalm 95.1, 2, 6.

Oh come, let us sing to the LORD!
Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving;
Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.

Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.

Sing joyously Psalm 95.1, 2, 6.

(Tidings: [*O Zion, Haste, Thy Mission High Fulfilling*](#))

Come, let us sing with joy to God, our Savior!
Let us with joy to Him, our Rock, bow down!
Come now before Him, grateful for His favor!
Let joyful psalms break forth from all around!

Refrain v. 6

Come let us worship, kneel to our Lord;
worship our Maker: Father, Holy Spirit, Word.

Read Matthew 4; meditate on Matthew 4.1.

Prepare.

1. Where did Jesus go after He was baptized? How did He know to go there?
2. Why did He go there?

Meditate.

This has to be one of the saddest passages in all of Scripture: “*It is eleven days’ journey from Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea. Now it came to pass in the fortieth year...*” (Deut. 1.2, 3).

The generation of God’s people whom He delivered from Egypt died in the wilderness, after forty years of wandering in disobedience. They gave in to their lusts; failed to believe in the promises awaiting them in the land of Canaan; grumbled and complained about being hungry and thirsty; disrespected their anointed leaders; took up idols of various kinds; and tempted God in many other ways.

They failed their test.

Jesus would recapitulate their tragedy, but with a totally different outcome.

After His baptism, Jesus “was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness”. Mark says that the Spirit *drove* Jesus into the wilderness (Mk. 1.12; the Greek is ἐβάλλει, *ekballei* – *cast Him out*). If we ever had any doubt about whether Jesus was full of the Spirit – without measure (Jn. 3.34, 35) – this episode should dispel that. The wilderness was a frightening place, inhabited by wild beasts and demons, and offering nothing of sustenance to any who might venture there. It would have been bad enough to trek into the wilderness just for the fun of it. But to go there to confront and be confronted by its master, the devil, was an altogether different proposition.

The wilderness is a symbol of the world under the devil's dominion. For thousands of years, the devil and his minions had spread the lie and nurtured its attendant miseries over all the earth, all in an attempt to mock God and, hopefully, to capture His throne. The drama that unfolds in the book of Job is a microcosm of the world under demonic dominion. But all that was about to change.

Jesus marched into the wilderness with one multi-faceted purpose: To wrest from Satan *all* his dominion; to establish the irresistible authority and power of the Word of God; to bind the devil and his ilk before beginning the plunder of all his possessions; and to claim the promise of the promised land for all the groaning and travailing world.

He had come to bring the Kingdom to the wilderness of the world, and He would need the fullness of the Spirit, and skill in wielding God's Sword, to achieve these aims.

Reflect.

1. Why did Jesus go out into the wilderness? Why was this important for His work?
2. How does Jesus' experience in the wilderness draw on Old Testament narratives? Why?
3. Why is it crucial for us, as followers of Christ, to understand what is about to happen in the wilderness?

*The Lord does whatever is necessary for our salvation by both acting and being acted upon. He submitted himself to being led up there to wrestle against the devil. Now we should not be troubled if, after our baptism, we too have to endure great temptations. We should not treat this as if unexpected but continue to endure all things nobly, as though it were happening in the natural course of things. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 13.1**

I need Your Spirit to fill me for this day, O Lord, because I...

Pray Psalm 95.3-11.

As you go out into the wilderness of the world, into your Personal Mission Field, listen to and listen for the voice of the Lord, to use you for His Kingdom and glory.

Sing Psalm 95.3-11.

Psalm 95.3-11 ((Tidings: [*O Zion, Haste, Thy Mission High Fulfilling*](#))

Great are You, Lord, a King above all nations.
All of earth's depths lie hidden in Your hand.
Yours are the mountains, Yours the sea, You made it;
You by Your hands created the dry land.

Refrain, v. 6

Come let us worship, kneel to our Lord;
Worship our Maker: Father, Holy Spirit, Word.

You are our God, we are Your sheep, Your people:
Speak, Lord, and let us hearken to Your Word.
Let not our hearts grow hard through sin, and feeble,
as when our fathers sinned against You, Lord.

Refrain

Long years You loathed that wicked generation,

who in their hearts, rebelled against Your path.
Them You forsook, and kept from Your salvation;
them You subjected to Your fearsome wrath.
Refrain

2 Our Necessary Food

Pray Psalm 119.1-8.

Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way,
Who walk in the law of the LORD!
Blessed *are* those who keep His testimonies,
Who seek Him with the whole heart!
They also do no iniquity;
They walk in His ways.
You have commanded *us*
To keep Your precepts diligently.
Oh, that my ways were directed
To keep Your statutes!
Then I would not be ashamed,
When I look into all Your commandments.
I will praise You with uprightness of heart,
When I learn Your righteous judgments.
I will keep Your statutes;
Oh, do not forsake me utterly!

Sing with conviction Psalm 119.1-8.

(Ode to Joy: Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee)

Blessed are they whose way is blameless, all who walk within God's Law,
who, His testimonies keeping, seek Him, filled with joy and awe.
These are they who, no wrong doing, ever walk within God's ways.
Lord, Your precepts You command us; we would keep them all our days.

Let my ways steadfastly keep to all the statutes of Your Word.
Then shall I, no shame enduring, fix my eyes on You, O Lord!
With an upright heart I praise You, in Your rules will I abide.
I will keep Your statutes wholly; keep me ever by Your side.

Read Matthew 4.1-4; meditate on verses 2-4

Prepare.

1. How long was Jesus in the wilderness before the devil confronted Him?
2. What was the devil's first line of attack against the Lord?

Meditate.

The Scriptures frequently refer to themselves as spiritual food. Job said that he considered the Word of God more important than the food that nourished his body (Job 23.12). Jeremiah delighted to feed on the Scriptures (Jer. 15.16). Paul and the writer of Hebrews mentioned Scripture both as food for infants and maturing saints (1 Cor. 3.1, 2; Heb. 5.12-14). Peter said we should eagerly desire the food Scripture provides, so that we may grow by it (1 Pet. 2.1-3).

It should not surprise us that Jesus took such language seriously. We can imagine that, during those forty days of fasting in the wilderness, He reviewed, recalled, recited, and thus fed on a great many

passages of Scripture. In fact, Scripture was undoubtedly the only thing on the menu for Him during those trying and lonely days, as He recapitulated Israel's wanderings, and prepared for His great victory over the enemy of God.

When Satan finally showed up to tempt Jesus, he thought he was beginning at the Lord's most vulnerable point – His hunger for food. The devil could not have been more wrong. Jesus was full of God's Word, and strong in it, and He would not allow Himself to fall into the tempter's trap. Satan knew Who Jesus was. He did not say to Him, "If it's really so that You are the Son of God..." He would have used the Greek ἐάν *ean* – *if it is so* – to say that (cf. v. 9). What he actually said was, "Since (Greek: Εἰ, *ei* – *if, or in this case, since*) You are the Son of God..." Satan's problem was he had too high a view of his own powers. But when you have ruled and bullied and trashed every kingdom of man for thousands of years, and the rest of creation to boot, you can begin to believe you're capable of just about anything.

Wrong. Jesus, the Son and Word of God, was not going to take orders or follow any suggestions by the one He was about to clap into spiritual irons. He knew that feeding on, relying on, and being sustained by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God was more important than satisfying any merely fleshly desire, or performing some miracle at the behest of the father of lies.

Test everything by the Word of God: This is the lesson from His temptation. Anything that might appeal to you, seem like the best way to go, an idea that won't hurt anyone, or something you strongly desire – all of it must be tested by the Word of God. If we feed on our lusts rather than Scripture, we will not make progress in the Lord. Instead, we'll simply give the devil the satisfaction of watching us founder on the rocks of misguided affections.

Jesus shows us where real power lies – in "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

Reflect.

1. What does it mean to "feed" on Scripture? How does that feeding nourish us?
2. Why should we test all our inclinations by the Word of God? Can we trust strong feelings as a reliable guide to action? Why not?
3. Jesus was hungry after His forty-day fast. But He would not eat at the devil's suggestion. Why not? What's the lesson here for us?

The Word of God is Christ the Lord, as the Evangelist says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." So, whoever feeds on the word of Christ does not require earthly food, nor can one who feeds on the bread of the Savior desire the food of the world. The Lord has his own bread; indeed, the bread is the Savior himself, as he taught when he said, "I am the bread who came down from heaven." Maximus of Turin (d. 423), Sermons 51.2

Feed me with Your Word, O Lord, and strengthen me today so that I...

Pray Psalm 119.171-176.

Praise God for His Word, and for His Spirit to teach it to you. Commit to talking with someone today about the glories of God's Word, and what you're learning from Him.

Sing Psalm 119.171-176.

Psalm 119.171-176 (Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

With our lips we praise You, Jesus, for You teach us, full and free.

Now Your Word will ever please us; Your commandments true shall be.
Let Your hand come forth to ease us; we Your Word choose gratefully!

For Your saving grace we plead, Lord, and Your Law is our delight.
We to live and praise You need, Lord, all Your help by day and night.
Straying sheep, we do not heed, Lord; come and seek us by Your might!

3 Throwdown

Pray Psalm 91.1-3.

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say of the LORD, “*He is my refuge and my fortress;*
My God, in Him I will trust.”
Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler.
And from the perilous pestilence.

Sing joyfully Psalm 91.1-3.

(Lauda Anima: [*Praise My Soul the King of Heaven*](#))

All who dwell within God’s shelter in His shadow will reside.
He our Tow’r, our Fortress ever, in Him we our trust confide.
From the trapper’s snares He saves us; safe from sickness we abide.

Read Matthew 4.1-7; meditate on verses 5-7

Prepare.

1. What did Satan want Jesus to do? How did he try to bolster his temptation?
2. To what did Jesus appeal in answering the devil?

Meditate.

Satan implied in this temptation that, if Jesus didn’t do what he suggested, it would indicate He doubted the truth of God’s Word. But Jesus knew that to yield to the devil’s test would be to *doubt* the Word of God, rather than to *trust* it. God had indeed said that His angels would protect His servants. That was good enough for Jesus – and, as we shall see, it turned out to be correct (v. 11). To *test* the Lord’s Word by doing what Satan indicated would actually have been to *doubt* its reliability. Jesus didn’t have to test the Word to know it was reliable.

We should be warned by what we see in this temptation, that it is possible to misuse the Word of God, even when you are quoting it exactly. Satan’s only goal in these temptations was to get Jesus to submit to his word – to exercise authority over Jesus, so that he could realize his own will above that of God. So, if using the Scripture would help him to achieve that end, he was not above doing so.

Jesus, however, would not give in to this sinister ploy. He shows us that, when we are interpreting the Bible, we must keep in mind a certain hierarchy of truths. Last on that list is what we want for our own selfish purposes, and what we might try to get the Bible to endorse, so that we can have our will rather than submit to God’s. At such times, the devil is encouraging us to use the Bible for *our* purposes, rather than those of the Lord. The more we know of Scripture, the better equipped we will be to understand how to compare passages of God’s Word, so as to know how to obey Him (1 Cor. 2.12, 13). We will be less likely to try to make the Scripture submit to our desires if we are continually increasing in understanding concerning God’s.

Jesus answered the devil’s throwdown with a throwdown of His own, and it would be His sticking to the Word of God in all things that ultimately threw the devil down to defeat.

Reflect.

1. Why was the devil wrong to cite the Scripture in this temptation? Are you ever tempted in this

way?

2. What do we mean by saying that a hierarchy of priorities must guide our interpretation of Scripture? What's the highest of those priorities?
3. How might you be able to know when you are trying to make the Scriptures justify some desire on your part?

What does Christ then do? He is neither indignant nor provoked but with extreme gentleness reasons with him again from the Scriptures, saying, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God," teaching us that we must overcome the devil not by miracles but by forbearance and long-suffering and that we should do nothing at all for display and vainglory. John Chrysostom (344-407), The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 13.4

Thank You for Your Word, O Lord! Help me to walk according to its light today as I...

Pray Psalm 91.11-16.

Thank God for angels to protect you throughout the day, and for His promise to deliver you in the face of every evil. Throughout the day, call upon the Lord in your times of trouble, and rejoice in His salvation.

Sing Psalm 91.11-16.

Psalm 91.11-16 (Lauda Anima: [*Praise My Soul the King of Heaven*](#))

He shall give His angels charge to bear us up, lest we should fall.

They will guard and carry all who on the Savior's mercy call.

Cobra, mighty lion, serpent: We shall tread upon them all!

Save us, Lord! We love You only; set us up secure on high!

You we know, on You we call in trouble: Hear us when we cry!

Show us Your salvation, let long life forever satisfy!

4 Whose Kingdoms?

Pray Psalm 110.5-7.

The Lord is at Your right hand;
He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath.
He shall judge among the nations,
He shall fill *the places* with dead bodies,
He shall execute the heads of many countries.
He shall drink of the brook by the wayside;
Therefore He shall lift up the head.

Sing contemplatively Psalm 110.5-7.

(Aurelia: [*The Church's One Foundation*](#))

The Lord at Your right hand, Lord, in wrath shall shatter kings,
when judgment by His strong Word He to the nations brings.
Then, all His foes defeated, He takes His hard-won rest,
in glorious triumph seated with us, redeemed and blessed!

Read Matthew 4.1-10; meditate on verses 8-10.

Prepare.

1. What did the devil offer Jesus? What was he trying to get Jesus to do?
2. How did Jesus overcome the devil?

Meditate.

Jonathan Edwards once referred to the devil as the greatest blockhead ever, because he actually believes the lies he spreads among the peoples of the world. One of those lies was that the kingdoms of the earth – all those nations and empires that came before Jesus – were actually *his* to do with as he pleased. Had he forgotten the lesson of the book of Job? God, Augustine wrote, has Satan on a leash; and he can only do as much as God allows.

So there is something almost comic about Satan offering “the kingdoms of the world and their glory” to Jesus. They weren’t actually his to give! God permitted him temporary dominion over the earth, until the time that Jesus should come and bring the eternal Kingdom to earth as it is in heaven. And that time was now. Jesus knew it, and so did Satan. But Jesus would not exchange the Kingdom of heaven for all the kingdoms of the earth, and He certainly was not about to bow down and worship the devil.

As He had done twice previously, Jesus drew on the Law of God to rebut the devil and send him packing. We don’t hear much about the Law of God in our day, and we are weaker because of this neglect. But Jesus’ example of how to resist the devil, so that he will flee from us (Jms. 4,7), offers wise counsel for overcoming temptation. The Law of God is holy and righteous and good (Rom. 7.12). The more we know of it, the better able we will be to recognize the sin Satan proffers in temptation, and to wield the Sword of the Lord in resisting the devil and continuing to seek the rule of King Jesus in our lives.

Reflect.

1. Are you ever tempted to “fall down and worship” anything other than the Lord? How do you

resist that temptation?

2. To overcome temptation we must first recognize for what it is, then oppose it with the truth of God. Why does this make the Law of God so important (cf. Rom. 7.7, 12)?

3. How can we better prepare ourselves to prevail when we are confronted by temptation?

No sin of diabolical scourge could come close to the body of the Lord. Therefore the Lord withstood temptations from the enemy that he might restore victory to humankind. Chromatius (fl. 400), *Tractate on Matthew 14.5*

Help me to recognize temptation, Lord, so that I...

Pray Psalm 110.1-4.

Rejoice in the Lord, Who is King of all nations! Seek His Kingdom today as you go forth, one of His volunteers, to bring the grace of Jesus to the people in your Personal Mission Field.

Sing Psalm 110.1-4.

Psalm 110.1-4 (Aurelia: [*The Church's One Foundation*](#))

“Sit by Me at My right hand,” the Lord says to my Lord,
“Until I make Your foot stand on all who hate Your Word.”
From in His Church the Savior rules all His enemies;
while those who know His favor go forth the Lord to please.

Filled with the Spirit's power, in holy robes of love,
from early morning's hour they serve their Lord above.
Christ reigns a priest forever, the King of Righteousness
and King of Peace who ever His chosen ones will bless.

5 Angels in His Corner

Pray Psalm 35.1-4.

Plead *my cause*, O LORD, with those who strive with me;
Fight against those who fight against me.
Take hold of shield and buckler,
And stand up for my help.
Also draw out the spear,
And stop those who pursue me.
Say to my soul,
“I *am* your salvation.”
Let those be put to shame and brought to dishonor
Who seek after my life;
Let those be turned back and brought to confusion
Who plot my hurt.

Sing Psalm 35.1-4.

(Creation: [*Exalt the Lord, His Praise Proclaim*](#))

Contend, O Lord, with those who strive with me!
My shield, my strength and buckler be!
Engage with spear and axe to fight
and rescue me with all Your might!
My soul with Your salvation soothe,
and vanquish all who oppose Your truth.
Let those ashamed and humbled be
who would destroy and humble me.

Read Matthew 4.1-11; meditate on verse 11.

Prepare.

1. What did the devil do following these three attempts to get Jesus to worship him?
2. What did the angels do?

Meditate.

Knocked down three times, the devil pleads “No más, no más” and leaves the ring. He is defeated. His best punches were easily deflected, and the body blows slammed against him by the straightforward Word of the Lord have taken all the wind out of his efforts.

He is beaten. But more than that: he is *bound*.

I’m arrested by Matthew’s “behold”. He uses this device not only to create a sense of immediacy – putting us, as it were, right into the action – but also to emphasize what’s happening. Angels arrive to minister to Jesus. The word is *were serving* or even *were “deaconing”* Him. This activity goes on for a while (as the imperfect form of the verb suggests), and we can imagine that it involves them giving Him food and drink; bearing Him up in His weariness; and celebrating His victory over Satan. Thus, what Satan offered in each of the temptations, God now provides His Son by the ministrations of angels. And we have a front row seat!

The heavens, we can be sure, erupt in shouts, as angels stream back and forth through the veil to

serve the Lord and ready Him for the next phase of His earthly sojourn. Jesus was true Man, and as such, He experienced human frailties, albeit without sin. To be tempted is not sin. When temptation comes, it's a call to battle; and we must be ready to bring the Word of God to bear against any unrighteousness. God will honor our standing in His Word, just as He did Jesus'.

Let's not miss the fact that angels do exist to serve the needs of God's servants. We don't see them, but they always stand ready to assist those who are determined to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (cf. Ps. 104.4 and Heb. 1.7, 14). We should be greatly encouraged by this, and emboldened in our walk with and work for the Lord.

Reflect.

1. Why didn't Satan continue tempting Jesus at this time? In what sense were those three temptations Satan's "best shot" at Jesus?
2. What can we learn from the fact that angels came to minister to Jesus?
3. Jesus was tempted, but He did not sin. Temptation is not sin, but when temptation comes, we will either *fall* through it into sin, or *grow* through it into greater sanctification. What do you learn from Jesus about dealing with temptation?

Luke expresses more: when all the temptation had been finished. This means, that no truce or relaxation was granted to Christ, till he had been fully tried by every species of contest. He adds, that Christ was left for a season only. This is intended to inform us, that the rest of his life was not entirely free from temptations, but that God restrained the power of Satan, so that Christ was not unseasonably disturbed by him. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Matthew 4.11

Let Your angels accompany and guard me today, O Lord, as I go forth to serve You by...

Pray Psalm 35.22-28.

Pray that the Lord will fight for you today as you go forth to serve Him, even to the extent of sending angels to defend you against every foe (vv. 5, 6). Shout for joy and be glad in the Lord!

Sing Psalm 35.22-28.

Psalm 35.22-28 (Creation: [*Exalt the Lord, His Praise Proclaim*](#))

Stir up, O God, and wake to my right;
defend my cause with all Your might!
And judge me in Your righteousness;
let not my foes bring me to distress.
Let shame, dishonor be their gown
who would Your holy ones bring down.
Let all who would themselves exalt
be humbled, shamed, and brought to naught.

Let all rejoice triumphantly
who would our vindication see.
Let them exalt the Lord above
who love the ones that Jesus loves.
And let our tongues declare Your praise,
and worship Jesus all our days.
Let those whom You are pleased to bless

forever declare Your righteousness!

6 The Gospel of Plunder

Pray Psalm 115.1-3.

Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us,
But to Your name give glory,
Because of Your mercy,
Because of Your truth.
Why should the Gentiles say,
“So where is their God?”
But our God is in heaven;
He does whatever He pleases.

Sing joyfully Psalm 115.1-3.

(Plainfield: [*Nothing but the Blood of Jesus*](#))

Not to us, O God, not us, but unto Your Name give glory!
For Your love and faithfulness, ever to Your Name be glory!
Why should the nations cry, "Where is their God on high?"
You rule us, Lord, on high: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Read Matthew 4.1-11; 12.22-29; meditate on verses 28, 29

Prepare.

1. How did Jesus describe the condition of the “strong man”? Who is this “strong man”?
2. Given that condition, what did Jesus describe Himself as doing?

Meditate.

Fast forward a bit to somewhere near the middle of Jesus’ earthly ministry. Jesus has been doing amazing things. He has been teaching new and exciting truths. People are flocking to Him from all parts of the region. Some have given up their former lives to follow Him. Lepers are made clean. The sick are restored to health. Winds and waves obey His command. Demons are sent packing. The paralyzed are made whole again. A young girl is raised from the dead. Blind men are given their sight, a mute man speaks, and the religious bosses of the day are humbled and rebuffed.

What’s going on here?

What’s going on is the plundering of Satan’s dominion. The devil thought the kingdoms of the world belonged to him. Jesus was showing him otherwise. In successfully fending off the devil’s temptations, Jesus not only beat him, He bound him. He rendered the devil powerless to stop whatever He wanted to do. And Jesus was doing the kinds of things that said to everyone around, “There’s a new King on the throne, and a new order is being established on earth – the order and rule of heaven.” A new regime of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit had come near and was advancing (Rom. 14.17, 18). When we pray for this (Matt. 6.10), and as we seek the Kingdom of God in everything we do (Matt. 6.33), we are carrying forward the Lord’s work of plundering the devil’s domain, and restoring everything to its rightful Owner.

Jesus explained His ability to cast out demons was the result of His having bound the “strong man”. Now He was about the business of taking back from the devil’s temporary possession everything that rightly belonged to Him. The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it (Ps. 24.1). The Good News of Jesus Christ is a Gospel of plunder – liberating everything in our lives, and throughout all creation,

and taking all things captive for obedience to Jesus Christ. The devil is still active, stalking about in spiritual chains, like some old Marley who can only intimidate, but not really hurt; and straining at the Lord's leash, Who keeps a firm hold on where he can go and what he can do. As long as we keep our distance from him, and stay on the path marked out for us by the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, there's nothing the devil can do to keep us from bringing life and hope and renewal to everything and everyone in our lives.

The strong man is bound. Your Personal Mission Field and everything in it have been reconciled to God. Now get out there and plunder, by the grace and truth of the Gospel, for the glory of God and His Kingdom!

Reflect.

1. Why is Jesus' triumph through the temptations of the devil of such enormous significance?
2. How did Jesus show that the devil no longer has any power wherever He exerts His will?
3. What do we mean by a "Gospel of plunder"? How does this relate to your calling in your Personal Mission Field?

*And here Jesus' saying seems to me to encompass a prophecy. For not only, I suppose, are the evil spirits the possessions of the devil but also the human beings that are doing Satan's works. Therefore he intends not only to cast out devils but also to drive away error from the world. He is putting down all sorceries and making the devil's arts useless. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 41.3**

Lord, rule through me in my Personal Mission Field, so that the righteousness, peace, and joy of Your Kingdom may...

Pray Psalm 115.9-18.

Give yourself anew and completely to Jesus, and prepare to go forth in His Name, conquering and to conquer, and plundering the former domain of Satan, wherever you encounter it in your Personal Mission Field.

Sing Psalm 115.9-18.

Psalm 115.9-18 (Plainfield: [*Nothing but the Blood of Jesus*](#))

All who trust in Jesus yield – ever to His Name be glory! –
find in Him their help and shield – ever to Your Name be glory!
O Israel, trust the Lord! He helps us evermore!
Fear Him obey His Word: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Blessings from our gracious Lord – ever to Your Name be glory –
will attend us evermore – ever to Your Name be glory!
Bless all who fear You, Lord, all who obey Your Word,
all who Your Name adore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Grant us, Savior, great increase – ever to Your Name be glory!
Bless us with eternal peace – ever to Your Name be glory!
Heaven and earth are Yours; let every soul adore
and bless You evermore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

7 The Walls Came Tumbling Down

Pray Psalm 111.1-3.

Praise the LORD!

I will praise the LORD with *my* whole heart,
In the assembly of the upright and *in* the congregation.
The works of the LORD *are* great,
Studied by all who have pleasure in them.
His work is honorable and glorious,
And His righteousness endures forever.

Sing joyfully Psalm 111.1-3.

(Manoah: [*When All Your Mercies, O My God*](#))

Praise the Lord! O let my heart give praise here amid His chosen race!
Your works are great, O Lord, and sought by all who know their grace.

For Your work is full of splendor, Lord, and of majesty most pure;
Your righteousness, O glorious God, forever will endure!

Read aloud and meditate on Matthew 4.1-11.

Prepare.

1. How many different ways did the devil try to tempt and defeat Jesus?
2. How did Jesus defeat the devil and his temptations?

Meditate.

When Joshua led Israel into Canaan, the promised land was filled with people who worshiped false idols, practiced devilish rituals, and fought constantly with one another. At the battle of Jericho, the walls came tumbling down, and with the walls of Jericho, the rule of pagan nations in the land of promise. The fall of Jericho was the death knell for paganism in Canaan, at least, for a season.

Just so, Jesus' victory over Satan in the wilderness brought down the walls of his flimsy domain and sent him and all his ilk into captivity (cf. 2 Pet. 2.4). Jesus' temptation was a great battle in the spiritual war for God's throne, and He showed that nothing would keep Him from claiming the crown that had been prepared for Him from before the foundation of the world. Jesus' victory in the wilderness sounded the death knell for Satan and his minions. Though the war continues until the King returns in glory to end it once and for all, ultimate victory was secured there in that Judean desert. All that remains is for Jesus and His followers to plunder the strong man's domain, freeing people from the lie, and restoring the reconciled world to God and His goodness.

Matthew's gospel will continue from here to reveal the Lord's battle plan and strategy, and to enlist us in the glorious work of seeking His Kingdom and righteousness. But the foundation for everything was laid here, in Matthew 4.1-11. We are to learn from Jesus that, in whatever we do in life, we must choose the truth of God rather than the lies of the devil; we must resist the allure of the flesh – satiation, self-serving, power, and all the rest – and look to God and His Word to direct our steps. Only the Word of God is a Sword sufficient to keep the devil at bay, and to allow us to continue the conquest of the earth in the train of our conquering King (Rev. 6.1, 2).

Reflect.

1. Why is the Word of God so important to life as a disciple of Jesus Christ?
2. How can we know when we are being tempted to choose the lie rather than the way of the Lord?
3. God will always be ready to assist us to wield His Word with power. What role should we expect angels to play in this?

*The Lord does whatever is necessary for our salvation by both acting and being acted upon. He submitted himself to being led up there to wrestle against the devil. Now we should not be troubled if, after our baptism, we too have to endure great temptations. We should not treat this as if unexpected but continue to endure all things nobly, as though it were happening in the natural course of things. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 13.1**

Keep me strong in You through every temptation, Lord, so that I may...

Pray Psalm 111.4-10.

Praise the Lord for all His many wonderful works, especially the work of Jesus, in freeing us from bondage to sin, fulfilling the promise of God's covenant, translating us into His Kingdom, and opening the treasures of His Word for understanding and wisdom.

Sing Psalm 111.4-10.

Psalm 111.4-10 (Manoah: [*When All Your Mercies, O My God*](#))

You have caused Your many wondrous works to remain before our face.
For You are full of mercy, Lord, and abounding all in grace.

For all who fear You, You provide; Your covenant endures.
Your pow'r You show Your people, Lord, and make the nations theirs.

The works of Your all-sovereign hands are faithful, Lord, and just.
Your precepts ever more are true and worthy of our trust.

You have sent redemption, to us, Lord, in Christ of cov'nant fame,
and we in wonder, grace, and awe adore Your holy Name.

All they who would true wisdom know must learn to fear You, Lord,
And in that wisdom daily live and praise You evermore.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. Why were these temptations so important? What was the devil trying to do?
2. What can we learn from Jesus about how to *recognize* temptation and how to *triumph* through it?
3. In what ways was Jesus' victory over the devil a recapitulating of Israel's conquest of Canaan? With what differences?
4. Following Jesus begins with, is anchored in, and grows by the Word of God. Explain.
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Matthew 4.1-11? How are you putting that lesson to work in your Personal Mission Field?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.