

HAVE YOU BEEN TESTED?

Matthew 4:1-11 Text vs. 7 *“Jesus answered him, ‘It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”*

The word “test” is used a lot these days. Have you had your test for COVID-19? Have you been tested for allergies? Have you been tested for drugs? In our lesson this morning, the word “test” was used after Jesus had been baptized by John in the River Jordan *and* then led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted, or tested, by the Devil. *And* after having not eaten for forty days and forty nights Jesus was hungry. *So*, the Devil came and offered Him *some* food. Jesus refused!

Then *“the Devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor and said, ‘All this I will give you, if You will bow down and worship me.’ Jesus said, ‘Away from Me, Satan! For it is written, Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.’”* Then the Devil left Jesus and angels came and attended Him.” This echoes back to Deut. 6:10-16 where it says, *“When the Lord your God brings you into the land He swore to your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He will give you a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build. Houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide. Wells you did not dig. Vineyards and olive groves you did not plan. Then, when you eat and are satisfied, be careful you do not forget the Lord who brought you out of Egypt. Out of the land of slavery. Fear the Lord your God. Serve Him only. And take your oaths in His name. Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you. For the Lord your God, who is among you, is a jealous God. His anger will burn against you. He will destroy you from the face of the land. Do not put the Lord your God to the test, as you did at Massah.”*

Now, *Massah* means trial, or temptation. It was one of the places where the Israelites camped during their *Exodus wandering* through the Sinai Desert on their way to the Promised Land. They witnessed many miracles. But after the Hebrew people had lived more than 80 years in severe oppression under Pharaoh and the Egyptians that God had sent Moses to convince Pharaoh to free the Jews. That defiant Pharaoh finally was crushed, and humiliated, and let them go. But it took ten horrific plagues to do it!

After parting the Red Sea, they crossed over on dry ground from Egypt to the Sinai Peninsula. (Exodus 14:21–22) No one doubted God’s presence was with them. No one could forget a pillar of cloud God made to guide them through the desert by day and a pillar of fire by night. (Exodus 13:21–22) Food was scarce. So, God provided “bread from heaven.” Manna. They fed on it until they entered the Promised Land. (Exodus 16:15; Joshua 5:12) But when their water supply began to run out, those people at Massah who had seen miracle after miracle with their own eyes, began to question God’s faithfulness. Their complaining for having no water angered God.

Do you remember the long-running Broadway play *My Fair Lady*? Eliza Doolittle’s father was a garbage man, who together with two of his friends sang in a deep Cockney accent a song about the everyday life in which they found themselves. *“With a Little Bit of Luck”* is a song about taking the easy way out. Fate might change you. Circumstances might keep you from taking any responsibility, but *“The Lord above made liquor for temptation, to see if man could turn away from sin. The Lord above made liquor for temptation, BUT, with a little bit of luck, with a little bit of luck, when temptation comes, you’ll give right in.”*

That’s what those Exiles at Massah hoped! With a little bit of luck, they would get some water! They were willing to do anything to have it! But fortunately, most people don’t have to give into temptation to get what they want. Some Christians do struggle with temptation. And it’s frightening how entire lives are destroyed. Some lives are forever changed, because when temptation came their way, they gave right in. Temptation’s no laughing matter! It destroys! Sin attracts. It’s like a big flashing neon sign! And temptation can be tricky. Some never consider how devastating and harmful the consequences of sin may be! Alcohol. Drugs. Sex. Dishonesty. Deceit. But temptation’s not a sin until you do it! However, your sinful nature constantly wants you to give in to temptation. That’s what leads you down the path to sin.

For example, imagine you’re having a difficult time financially. You’re a cashier in a store. You handle large amounts of cash every day. One day, you receive a personal PAST DUE notice for \$100 in the mail. The next day you’re at work. Someone hands you a \$100 bill. Your mind immediately thinks of the PAST DUE bill you just received. For an instant, you imagine how nice it would be to take that \$100 to pay your bill. But after a moment, you dismiss the temptation. Now, if you had given in, it would have led you to sin, UNLESS, you removed the temptation of the money from your mind and placed yourself under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Bad things can, and will, happen if you don’t do that! Remember, temptation by and of itself, is not sin. Sin is when you do it!

Jesus faced temptation. Just as you do! But HE NEVER gave in! That makes Him the *Master Teacher* on how to deal with temptation. The Temptation of Jesus was necessary because as a man, He had to learn to depend on the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, as a man. He had to be tested as a man. He had to be proven as a man. He had to be tried as a

man. He had to be strengthened by the Spirit of God, just like you! He had to go through everything you go through. Hebrews 4:15 says, *“We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses We have One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”*

It was necessary for Jesus to be tested. It was necessary for Jesus to be tried as no other human ever has been tried, to show He was worthy to claim leadership as Messiah. It would have been impossible for any other man to be tempted and to have withstood His temptations. Who wouldn't be tempted to turn stones into bread if they were hungry? Jesus wasn't! Who wouldn't want power to rule the world? Jesus already had it!

October 31, 1517 Martin Luther, angry with Pope Leo X's selling pardons for the forgiveness of sins to help build St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, nailed a sheet of paper called the 95 Theses on the University of Wittenberg's chapel door in objection to that. Then, on January 1521 Pope Leo X excommunicated Martin Luther from the Church. Luther's fiery words in his 95 Theses had set off the Protestant Reformation across Europe and changed the course of Western civilization. But later, in a room of the castle at Wartburg, Germany, Martin Luther was writing his Commentaries and translating the Holy Bible into German while being tempted by the Devil. He threw his ink bottle at the Devil! There's still an ink stain there!

So as a Christian, how will you react when Satan tempts you? I Corinthians 10:13 says, *“No temptation has overtaken you, but such as is common to man. And God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able. But with the temptation, will provide the way of escape, so that you will be able to endure it.”* Nobody can feel the way you do when you're fighting off the temptation to have one last drink! A fentanyl pill. One little heroin shot in the arm. Fudge the truth a little! Take something's that's not yours! But when you're all alone, and the final decision is yours, temptation is a place of loneliness! No one can take your place!

Look at that verse again. *“No temptation has overtaken you, but such as is common to man. And God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able. But with the temptation, will provide the way of escape, so that you will be able to endure it.”*

Listen, you may feel you're alone. But you're not alone when you're being tempted! Jesus is right there beside you! God's Holy Spirit will help you understand that it is God who is proving you. Purifying you for His Kingdom. And it's God who forgives you. You're never alone when you face temptation. The goal and the aim of all believers should be to please God. Wouldn't you love to hear God say about you, *“This is my beloved in whom I am well pleased!”* (Matt. 3:17)

That's what caused a showdown in the desert between Good and Evil. That test between Jesus and Satan. And it's the same with you. Satan's going to test you if you are pleasing God in any way. He's going to try to destroy you! Have you been tested about anything in the past? Are you being tested now? When were you tested for COVID-19, what were the words you wanted to hear? *“You're free!”* How about when you've had a serious disease in your body? *“You're free!”* It's the same when you've been tested by Satan. When you have overcome your addiction. When you have kicked your habit. When you've lost your desire for sin. You're free from temptation by the grace of God. And you have the forgiveness of God! That's when *“You're free!”* It's when you can say *“God is faithful. He has not allowed me to be tempted beyond what I am able. But with that temptation, He provided me with the way of escape, through my faith in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Thank God, I'm FREE!”* And all the people say, AMEN