

True Freedom
Luke 4:1–44

Introduction

- Conversation I had with a teenager, whom we will call Jessica, from about 8 years ago.
- Previously served as Youth Minister; Jessica had been part of our church for years.
- Jessica: No longer following Jesus.
- Me: Is it doubt?
- Jessica: I want to be free.
- Tonight we will look at Luke 4 together.
- Framing question: What does it mean to be free?
- Introduction to chapter:
 - Two parts: (1) Jesus’s temptation in the wilderness and (2) the beginning of Jesus’s preaching ministry.
- Warning about method:
 - Attention to OT background and allusions. Almost obnoxious.
 - Common perception is that NT replaces the OT.
 - However, NT consistently presents Jesus in the language and ideas of the OT.
 - Best to think of a musical composition. The coming of Jesus is the crescendo. Crescendo has its fullest effect when heard within the context of all that has come before. It is, in fact, based upon and it builds upon the rest of the song.
 - Consider reading major parts of the OT this year.
 - Further warning, if you hear me reference the Hebrew Bible, this is a Freudian slip. I mean OT.

I. Jesus as God’s Obedient Son (vv. 1–13).

A. Explanation

1. Context

- Verse 1 says that Jesus “returned from the Jordan River,” which reminds us of what has just happened in Luke 3.
 - Luke 3 tells us about John the Baptist as Jesus’s forerunner and how Jesus was baptized by him. The high point of the story when God the Father speaks from heaven and declares, concerning Jesus, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”
 - After Jesus’s baptism, Luke pauses the action to give us Jesus’s genealogy. Luke’s genealogy is unique in that he traces Jesus’s ancestry all the way back to Adam, declaring Jesus to be the Son of God.
 - Common theme: Jesus is God’s Son.

- The story of Jesus’s temptation in Luke 4 continues this theme and presents Jesus as God’s son, particularly emphasizing that Jesus is God’s *obedient* son.

2. Introduction: vv. 1–2.

- 40 days, *being tempted*. Jesus was tempted throughout the duration of the 40 days. Who knows in what ways? What gets is a representative set of temptations.
- 40 days in wilderness. Can anyone think of a story in the OT in which there is a significant water miracle followed by a 40 unit time of testing? Keep this in mind.

3. Temptation #1: vv. 3–4.

- If you are the Son of God – remember that the main theme of this section of Luke’s gospel is Jesus’s identity as God’s Son. Satan is appealing to Jesus to get him to prove his status as God’s Son.
 - Command this stone to become bread. Recall Numbers 20 when Moses is supposed to speak to the rock so that it would yield water for Israel.
 - Consider that Jesus has not eaten for 40 days and that he certainly can make the stones into bread.
 - Jesus’s response is an abbreviated quotation of Deut 8:3:
Deut 8:2–3
² Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. ³ He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.
 - Story of manna: people’s complaint (“O that we had died in Egypt, where we sat by meat pots and ate bread until we were full. You brought us out here to kill us with hunger!”). Next morning – after dew rises, there is a layer of flaky bread. The people do not know what it is. They say, “What is it? (*man hu*),” which is where the name manna comes from (literally “what?”). God sustains them on this bread for the entire 40 years that the people were in the wilderness. According to Deuteronomy 8, this was to teach them that they were not to trust in food for their sustenance but in God.
- 4.
- Jesus obeys the lesson that Israel was suppose to learn from the manna. Temptation #2: vv. 5–8.
 - Offer – authority and glory of all the world’s kingdoms in exchange for worship.
 - Note: Satan does not have ultimate authority. His own language even acknowledges this (v. 6). For a time, Satan may be called the prince of this world. Ultimately, however, we know that the kingdom belongs to God and that he gives it to whomever he pleases.
 - Jesus refuses and quotes from Deut 6:13.
 - In Deuteronomy 6 and 7, it is stated that if God’s people are faithful to him, he will drive out their enemies before them. How is Israel to conquer the kingdoms of the land and possess the promised land? By remaining faithful to God. If we continue reading in Deuteronomy, we hear the other side of this coin: idolatry → conquest by foreign nations.
- 5.
- Satan again takes Jesus to a high place. He again challenges Jesus to prove that he is God’s Son, now by jumping off the temple.
 - Jesus’s response: Deut 6:16
Do not put the LORD your God to the test as you did at Massah.
 - The episode of Massah (lit. “testing”)=Exodus 17. The people accuse Moses of bringing them into the wilderness to kill them with thirst. God provides water for them from the rock.
 - In Luke’s account, the final temptation of the episode.
 - Note Satan’s quotation of Scripture:

- Satan quotes from Psalm 91, which is a psalm about those who trust in the LORD in hardship and how God will not abandon them.
- Note the verse following the one that the Ancient Serpent quotes:
- Ps 91:11-13
 For he will command his angels concerning you
 to guard you in all your ways;
 they will lift you up in their hands,
 so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

Notice the importance of the imagery of the striking of the foot.

You will tread on the lion and the cobra;
 you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

- Do you remember what happened in the garden of Eden in Gen 3?
- Psalm 91: the one who trusts in the LORD will triumph over the Serpent!
- Satan tries to get Jesus to prove that he is God's Son by miraculous demonstrations. Jesus shows he is God's son in a more profound way – he obeys his Father and trusts in him.
- By so doing, he conquers both temptation and the Tempter.

How does the Ancient Serpent tempt you? What leads your heart astray? Perhaps you often find yourself burning with anger towards your children or your spouse? Burning with lust? Maybe finances tempt you to be deceptive? Or you just don't want to get out of bed? Maybe you feel beaten down by life and disappointment is growing into disillusionment and bitterness? Perhaps you are eaten up with stress and feel like a human pressure cooker? Temptation and trial come to us in many ways and I cannot even begin to address all of the experiences of us in this room. So, call up your temptations and trials now.

- B. APP: In light of Jesus's temptation, how should I react to temptation and trial?
1. Look (to Jesus) – Jesus's victory is my victory.
Features in story that are easy to miss but are foundational to its meaning.
 - a. Jesus and Israel
 - i. God's two sons in the OT: Israel and the Son of David.
 - ii. The story of Jesus's temptation intentionally replays the story of Israel in the exodus and the wilderness.
 - iii. Baptism-Red Sea → 40 days/years in wilderness
 → Exodus 14-15 are followed by Exodus 16, the provision of Manna=Jesus's first temptation → Exodus 17 is Israel's testing of God at Massah, which is the background of Jesus's third temptation.
 - iv. In the person of Jesus, the history of Israel in the exodus is being replayed, with one significant difference. He passes the test. He learned the lessons Israel was intended to learn. He proves to be God's true son.
 - b. The King and the People
God's two sons (corporate and individual) are not unrelated.

- i. In the OT, there is a tight and inseparable relationship between the king and the people.
 - ii. Recall the story of David's census from 2 Sam 24. Sin → Plague.
2 Sam 24:17: "I am the one who has sinned and done wrong. But these sheep, what have they done?"
 - iii. Opposite in Christ – the people sin and the king suffers.
 - iv. The reverse also happens. The king obeys. His obedience is credited to his people.
 - c. Marriage, Debts, and Assets
 - i. Marriage is about two becoming one...including finances.
 - ii. Debts and Assets
 - iii. If we think about our relationship with Christ as a marriage, recognize what you bring – debts only. Recognize what Christ brings – assets only. Miracle of the gospel (Luther's "great trade") is that when we are united to Christ by faith, he takes our debts and we take his assets. You are not only forgiven but are actually credited the righteousness of Jesus. Justification.
 - iv. When Satan accuses you and says, "Who are you?! Where is your righteousness?!" You may remind him and your own heart, "You know what happened in the wilderness; Christ defeated you, obeyed the Father, and has paid the debt of my sin. There is my Righteousness!"
 - v. Look. Look at Christ's victory. It is your victory.
- 2. Rest (in Jesus) – Jesus understands what I'm experiencing and cares.
 - a. Heb 4:15
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.
 - b. He understands.
 - i. When we are going through trial, we draw special comfort from people who have the same experiences. They understand.
 - ii. Christ has been tested in every way as we are. He understands.
 - iii. Christ understands suffering and temptation more deeply than we do. Consider this illustration from Paul David Tripp:
"Imagine a strong man bending an iron bar at a fair. The first bar is thin and weak and it snaps in half. The second bar is much thicker and stronger. Even though the strong man exerts all his strength, it bends until the ends touch, but it never breaks. Which bar endured more pressure? The second! It absorbed the full force of the man's strength, but didn't break. On earth, Jesus was like that second bar. Because he never gave in, because he did not run away, because he never went where temptation would lead, but stood strong until that moment of temptation was over, he endured the full power of temptation. Christ endured stress, pain, suffering, sacrifice of an intensity that

we will never face because he did not break. He stood against sin for us. He endured everything the world could throw against him.”

- c. He cares.
 - i. The fact that Jesus succeeded in temptation while we often fail does not mean that he meets us condescendingly in temptation.
 - ii. He sympathizes with us in our weakness.

Rest in Christ.

- 3. Fight (behind Jesus) – By Jesus’s example and the Spirit’s power, I can overcome temptation and the Tempter.
 - a. Mickey Townsley
 - 4th-5th Grade lunch recess = kill the man with the football.
 - Mickey Townsley = manchild.
 - The takedown.
 - The (perceived) fallout.
 - b. Christ has defeated temptation and the Tempter. Your opponent is not undefeated. By the Spirit’s power and the example of Jesus, temptation can be overcome, trial can be victoriously endured. Temptation and suffering need not be defeat. Enter into battle behind Christ.

Conclusion

- Back to Jessica’s words: “I want to be free.”
- Clear that Jesus came to bring freedom. Jesus and Jessica have different definitions of liberty.
- Jessica’s understanding = not uncommon.
- American Revolution:
 - Liberty = independence
 - Liberty = self-governance
- Jesus has come to bring you liberty, but not independence.
 - Temptation story = freedom from sin is based on Christ’s victory and we are utterly and joyfully dependent on him.
- Jesus has come to bring you liberty, but not self-governance.
 - Freedom only exists within the realm of his authority.
 - Belongs only to those who joyfully submit to him.
- What will you do with Jesus of Nazareth?
 - Diverse reactions: Nazareth, demons, Capernaum.
 - The most illogical reaction: casual indifference.