



Sermon Series – God with Us

Luke 4:1-13 #4 Three tests for 2021 17/01/21

What would you say to a basketball shoot out against **LeBron James**?

How about defending goals against Australia's soccer champ, Sam Kerr?

I know what you'd say. You'd say, "That's **an unfair contest!**" These people are **in a different league** to you and me.

In today's passage from **Luke chapter 4** don't we have another **unfair contest** before us? Don't you think the devil was **out of his league when challenging** Jesus? After all, isn't Jesus the **unique Son of God?**

Look again at verses 1 & 2 ...

When Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry.

You and I would last about 5 seconds if offered food and water in exchange for our souls! I'd **fold like a cheap suit** in no time flat. But **not Jesus!** In this episode of Jesus' early days, his faith and resolve must have been **super-human** – he was in a **different league** to you and me **wasn't he?**

Luke wants you to see that the **exact opposite** is true here. Jesus was, in every way, **just like you and me in this series of tests in the wilderness.** And that fact is vitally important to our hope.

Jesus, our true representative

In chapter 3 of his Gospel, Luke revealed Jesus' **unique relationship** with God **at Jesus' baptism.**

But at the close of chapter 3 he **also** shows Jesus' lineage back to the Bible's first humans, **Adam and Eve**.¹ For Luke, Jesus' **true divinity** and **true humanity** matter **equally**.

Look at the three familiar human temptations of Luke 4 chapter 4:

1. In verse **3** Jesus is enticed by the prospect of **instant satisfaction**
2. In verse **6** there is the allure of **unlimited power**, and
3. In verse **9**, the most tempting of all, the offer **invincibility, control over life** itself.

Like Israel in their **40 years of testing** in the wilderness² Jesus was hot, parched, hungry, thirsty – yet he was **faithful** to God – he is the **true Israel**.³

Like Job, Jesus' faith was tested sorely. But, unlike Job, Jesus **willingly endured** temptations to become what Hebrews calls, the “**pioneer and perfecter of our faith**.”⁴

Adam and Eve of Genesis 3 **succumbed** to the **serpent's** temptation to be gods themselves.⁵ Though he was **like them**, he was without sin - Jesus **trusted in God's word**. The Apostle Paul calls him the **second Adam**.⁶

Jesus' **true humanity** is **critical to our being saved from our sins**.⁷

Paul affirms this in Colossians chapter 1, saying...

19 For in [Jesus Christ] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰
and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things,
whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood
of his cross.

¹ It's curious to note that Adam is referred to as the “son of God” in the genealogy of Luke 3.

² Deuteronomy 8:2

³ Acts 13:22-23

⁴ Heb. 12:2

⁵ Gen. 3

⁶ Rom 5:18-19

⁷ E.g. In Luke 1 the humility of pregnancy and childbirth as the means of Messiah, and in Luke 2 the child Jesus and the boy Jesus submitting to religious traditions as a sign of alignment with God's promises of old

Tim Keller says,

“What’s shocking [about the Gospel] is the way God chose to fix [our] relationship...to save us by actually **becoming one of us**. What’s more, in the person of Jesus Christ, not only did God enter into humanity... God **took on the sin of humanity**, even the consequences of that sin, which is death.”

Being **truly human** (like us, but **without sin**) and being **truly God** (having divine origins as well) makes Jesus **perfectly fit** to bridge the **vast gap** between **sinners** and **God** – he is our **true representative**.

Jesus, our model for humanity

But there’s something more to glean from Luke 4. Jesus is also a **model example** of living by **faith**. Look again at the passage...

1. In verse **4** Jesus quotes the Bible⁸ and affirms that **trusting in God** is the true path to **satisfaction**.
2. In verse **8** Jesus quotes the Bible,⁹ rejecting the **premise that power over others is the prize of life**. Instead, **God is the prize**. God is the goal! **No other** is worthy of our worship and service.¹⁰ And...
3. Thirdly, in verse **12** Jesus quotes the Bible,¹¹ affirming that **life is the gift of God, not ours to control**. The blessing of life itself, and even his own status as God’s Messiah¹² **in not seen by Jesus as his own**. Instead, he lives as if life is God’s to **give or to take**.

Jesus’ way seems so **counterculture** to ours...

- The temptation to be self-reliant (e.g. to **never be hungry or thirsty**) is in our **panic-buying** whenever a lock-down is announced.
- The allure of **power over others** that strokes the ego and aims to amass a fortune dominates our **evening news** broadcasts,

⁸ Deut. 8:3

⁹ Deut. 6:13

¹⁰ Philippians 2:6-8 speaks of Jesus ‘emptying’ himself (Greek word ‘kenosis’) of all authority, though it was rightfully his to take.

¹¹ Deut. 6:16

¹² Luke is pointing to Jesus as “Messiah”, Hebrew for anointed one from God. In Greek it is “Christ”

- Our grief and anxiety over **Covid**-related deaths **includes the stark reminder** that life is **fragile** and often **beyond our control**.

Jesus is both our perfect **representative** and our prime **example of faith** as he takes the **road less travelled**.

Paul praised Jesus for this in Philippians 2, saying:

“...though he was in the form of God, [Christ] did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself...”¹³

Conclusion

You and I might be **out of our league** against **LeBron** at the ring, **or Kerr** at the net. But it's vital to know that Jesus is **truly our human representative** in God's scheme **to save us** from sin – he is **truly like us** in all our **fragility, weakness, yearning**, and even the potential to **fail** and fall. As those **redeemed** by his blood, we are **invited to follow** his example of faith.

The writer to the Hebrews put it this way...

“...we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb 4:14-16 NRSV)

Take time out to give thanks that **God was in Christ**, for us.

Call on God's Spirit to keep you **faithful to God** when the tests are hard.

Keep looking to Jesus as the author and perfecter of our faith.

Steve Webster

St Michaels North Carlton

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¹³ “emptied himself” is *kenosis* in Greek, the subject of much scholarly debate over the truly human reliance on God, though he was truly the Son of God.