

Conversations on
Luke 4:1–13

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! Watch “Ash Wednesday & Lent in Two Minutes” on YouTube (bit.ly/LentIn2). What did you learn in that brief time?

WHAT is important to know?

Jesus’ time in the wilderness is a time of “testing” (*peirasmos*). These are not “temptations” to do things that are desirable but not good for him (like our “temptation” to eat an extra piece of cake). Rather, these are tests to see whether even good things can lure Jesus from a focus on God’s will—or can lure believers into following a more comfortable messiah. In two of the three the devil’s hook to catch Jesus is the challenge “if you are the Son of God . . .” Does Jesus really believe what he has heard? Will God make good on the implied commitment? Let’s find out before you go charging off into dangerous places. (*Sharon H. Ringe*)

- ✠ Why was this time of testing/temptation a necessary prelude to Jesus’ ministry?
- ✠ What “good things” was Jesus presented as temptations to turn away from God’s will?
- ✠ How was it possible for Jesus to keep focused on God’s word and will during the testing time?

WHERE is God in these words?

The story is more about the responses Jesus gives to the temptations than to the temptations themselves. Jesus’ responses underscore his faithfulness to God, setting the stage for the whole of his ministry and, ultimately, his sacrifice. His responses come with the full knowledge that obedience to God will bring persecution, misunderstanding, and the cross. To say yes to the world would have required Jesus to say no to God, to the way of God, and to an idea of God’s kingdom that those followers simply did not understand. It would have required him to say no to the freedom and love for humanity that are the marks of his death and resurrection. (*Lori Brandt Hale*)

- ✠ In what ways did Jesus’ resistance to the temptations help equip him for obedience during his ministry?
- ✠ How would Jesus’ ministry have been different if he had given in to any of the temptations?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

By taking on “intentionality” and “receptivity to God’s grace” during Lent, new converts and members gain the spiritual depth to be faithful to “the mystery of God-with-us” even in our unexpected trials and temptations. Jesus did not ask for trials and temptations; he accepted that they could not be avoided if he would do God’s will. Jesus’ season of testing was not for a day or two; his season of forty days of temptation suggests to us that we may have faithfully to endure seasons of long and protracted difficulty. Jesus did not have just one encounter of diabolical testing; he overcame multiple temptations. His temptations were real and riveting. (*Jeffery L. Tribble Sr.*)

- ✠ When have you faced temptation and not given into it?
- ✠ What resources does God give us to resist testing and temptations?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

The text tells a story about how evil works on the basis of distortions and lies. The devil presents wants as needs, falsehoods as truths, distrust as faith. The devil’s second pitch is false, as revealed by the demand for false worship. At stake is who will be trusted and worshiped. We ask: Where else do we hear lies that sound truthful? From politicians or the media, or the pulpit? How might clinging to God’s word unveil such lies as lies? Also, of the first and third temptations, we could ask: Where else do we see wants presented as needs? Where are we tempted to think of faith as something God must earn? (*Kimberly M. van Driel*)

- ✠ What are ways to detect the lies and falsehoods that temptations present?
- ✠ How does clinging to God’s word help us in the face of testing and temptations?

Gracious God, lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil. Amen.