

The Great Enemy - Matthew 3:13-4:11
Argyle – 3/5/17 – *Encounters With Jesus* (Keller)

Introduction to Scripture

This morning we are going to look at Jesus' baptism and temptation. Often we see these as unrelated events that happened to occur around the same time. The fact that in our Bibles these two events are recorded in different chapters emphasizes this separation. We need to remember, however, that our chapter and verse divisions were not part of the original text. The Biblical writers intended their books to be read as a whole, not as a series of chapters. The Bible wasn't divided into chapters until 1227 when Stephen Langton, a professor at the University of Paris added the chapter divisions. The verse divisions weren't until 400 years later.

The chapter and verse divisions were added for convenience. For instance, if we were studying the parable of the seed and sower in Matthew's gospel this morning, it might take us the whole morning to find it without chapter divisions. But I can say, "Turn to Matthew 13" and we would be able to find it in a few seconds.

While the chapter and verse divisions are helpful, they can also be a problem in our interpretative work. This morning is an example of that. Chapter 4 begins with the work "then." It is clearly connecting Jesus' temptation with his baptism. Let's look for that connection as we read this passage together. (Read) (Pray)

The Hybrid Messiah

The first thing I want to talk about this morning is the hybrid Messiah. For hundreds of years the Jewish people had been anticipating the arrival of the Messiah. If you had asked them what this Messiah would be like they would have pointed you to a Scripture passage like Psalm 2. There we read,

Why are the nations so angry?
Why do they waste their time with futile plans?
² The kings of the earth prepare for battle;
the rulers plot together
against the LORD
and against his anointed one.
³ “Let us break their chains,” they cry,
“and free ourselves from slavery to God.”

⁴ But the one who rules in heaven laughs.
The Lord scoffs at them.
⁵ Then in anger he rebukes them,
terrifying them with his fierce fury.
⁶ For the Lord declares, “I have placed my chosen king on the throne
in Jerusalem, on my holy mountain.”

⁷ The king proclaims the LORD’s decree:
“The LORD said to me, ‘**You are my son.**
Today I have become your Father.
⁸ Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance,
the whole earth as your possession.
⁹ You will break them with an iron rod
and smash them like clay pots.”

¹⁰ Now then, you kings, act wisely!
Be warned, you rulers of the earth!
¹¹ Serve the LORD with reverent fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
¹² Submit to God’s royal son, or he will become angry,
and you will be destroyed in the midst of all your activities—
for his anger flares up in an instant.
But what joy for all who take refuge in him!

The Messiah the Jews were expecting would be a king who would defeat the nations including Israel's enemies. So when the voice of God the Father said, "This is my Son whom I love," the folks who heard it would have connected it to Psalm 2. Maybe this Jesus was the Messiah.

But that is not all that God the Father had to say about his son. He went on to say, "...with him I am well pleased." That's, also, from the Old Testament, but it is not from Psalm 2 or any other passage that was considered to be messianic. It was from a passage the Jews would have never connected with the Messiah - Isaiah 42.

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one **in whom I delight;**
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will bring justice to the nations.
² He will not shout or cry out,
or raise his voice in the streets.
³ A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;
⁴ he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.
In his teaching the islands will put their hope."

This is one of the four so called "servant songs" in Isaiah. The best known is Isaiah 53 which we read almost every Easter. There we read, "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. ⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his

wounds we are healed. ⁶We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Nobody identified these passages about a suffering servant with the Messiah. Yet at his baptism, God the Father pulled these two ideas together. The Messiah would be both a conquering hero and a suffering servant. That is what I mean by a “hybrid Messiah.” His first task would not be to deal with evil in the rebellious nations, but to deal with evil in our rebellious hearts. That would require a king who came not to a throne, but to a cross. That would require a servant who would be pierced for our transgressions. That would require a hybrid Messiah who would be both a conquering hero and a suffering servant. This plan of God’s to rescue his people through a suffering servant is what the devil tries to derail in his temptation of Jesus.

The Existence of the Devil

Before we look at the temptations themselves, we need to address an unsettling issue this passage raises for us. That is the existence of the devil. Some of you are probably thinking, “Come on...this is 2017. We don’t believe in ghosts and demons and the devil anymore. To believe in the devil is naive.” In his introduction to *The Screwtape Letters* ([picture](#)), C.S. Lewis said that the prevailing opinions on the devil are that he was either a cartoon character in a red suit with horns and a pitchfork or that he didn’t exist. Lewis wrote that in 1942 and attitudes about the devil haven’t changed much since then.

The Bible has a very different perspective on the devil, who is also called “Satan.” There we discover that the devil was a lead angel who rebelled against God’s authority and led one third of the angels with him. He and they are committed to destroying God plans and God’s people. It was the devil appearing as a serpent who tempted Eve to rebel against God. The devil asked for permission from God to afflict Job. The devil tempted Jesus in the dessert right after his baptism. The devil appears throughout Scripture in opposition to God’s people and God’s work. James tells us to resist the devil and he will flee from us. Paul warns us to put on the whole armor of God so that we can take our stand against the devil’s schemes. The Bible clearly teaches that the devil is a real, personal, evil being.

Without an understanding of the devil, we have a difficulty explaining the origin and depth of evil in our world. In (picture), *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil* Andrew Delbanco writes, “A gulf has opened up in our culture between the visibility of evil and the intellectual resources available for coping with it.” Tim Keller adds, “...the Bible can bridge that gulf and account for all that we experience personally and witness in the sweep of history. ...It maintains that, in addition to systematic injustices and personal ignorance and physiological imbalances, there really are forces of spiritual evil in the world - and behind them all, there is a singular supernatural intelligence.” Keller warns that when we reject the Biblical idea of the existence of the devil, it leads to us underestimating and sometimes misdiagnosing the power of evil in the world.

If you are one of the skeptics about the existence of the devil, I would invite you to reconsider your position in light of the existence of evil in our world and how the Bible explains it.

The Ins and Outs of Temptation

Finally this morning I want to look at the ins and outs of temptation. We learn a lot about the nature of temptation and how to deal with it from this event. As I mentioned earlier, the baptism and temptation of Jesus are not unrelated events. In his baptism Jesus is identified as God's Son whom he loves and is pleased with. The devil goes right after that identity. He introduces two of the three temptations with the words, "If you are the Son of God..." If he can get Jesus to doubt his identity then he can derail God's plan to save the world through him. The devil offers Jesus a deal. He will give Jesus what is promised him in Psalm 2, the submission of the nations, in exchange for Jesus bowing down and worshipping him. The end justifies the means, right? The goal is to thwart God's plan to save the world through Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross. If Jesus had taken that deal, he would have gained the nations, but lost the people of the nations.

In resisting the temptations that we face, we need to remember that what is really going on is the devil's attempts to destroy God's plans by challenging our identities. You see, as followers in Christ, we are God's sons and daughters whom he loves and with whom he is well pleased. I think we get the first part of that, but struggle to embrace the second part. Jesus' work on the cross was so complete, that

not only are we forgiven, but God is pleased with us. As Keller says, “Our self image rests in a love we can’t lose.” When we understand and live into that identity of being God’s children whom he is pleased with, we are have power that the devil doesn’t want us to know we have. And so he tries to get us to doubt this identity, to slide back into a self-image that is based on performance and accomplishments. As long as we are trying to earn our salvation or to prove our worth, we are of no danger to the devil. In addition to trying to get us to doubt our identities, the devil tries to get us to compromise them. So, if he can get us to lie or to cheat on our income taxes or to view pornography or to think we are better than someone else or to nurture resentment toward somebody or to be greedy, he is getting us to act contrary to our identities as God’s children. When we act contrary to our identities as God’s children, God’s plans are disrupted and that is what Satan is really after. We I disobey God’s commands, I compromise my integrity, I hurt my marriage, I harm the church, I wound my neighbor, I bring disgrace on God’s kingdom, I cause doubt in unbelievers. That is what is really at stake in temptation.

That’s why Jesus’ resisting of the devil’s temptations was so important in preserving God’s plan to rescue the world from its sin. And that is why it is so important that we resist temptation, as well. In his resistance, Jesus gave us a great model to follow. He quoted Scripture in resisting each of Satan’s temptations. The key to doing that, of course, is for us to know the Scriptures, not just casually, but in

depth. The more time and effort we have put into knowing God's word, the more equipped we will be to recognize the devil's temptations and to resist them.

This week began the season of Lent. I want to challenge you to try something new over the next 6 weeks that will help you get to know God's word better. Grab one of the Bible study guides in the Vestibule or Lobby and read a portion of the Bible every day. Join a Bible study or Sunday school class to study the Bible with others. Try out that women's Lenten video series that starts this week. Read *Encounter With God* or another book that will help you understand the Bible better. Make a commitment to being in worship every week to hear God's word preached, even if you are out of town. Take advantage of this season of Lent to better equip you to resist the temptations that the devil puts in your way to try and ruin what God is doing through you to build his kingdom.

Conclusion

The bread and the cup of the Lord's Supper remind us that we have a hybrid Messiah, a King who not only rules over creation, but who also died for our sins. He was able to be the perfect sin sacrifice because he resisted the devil's temptations and lived a perfect life. Through faith in him we have become God's sons and daughters whom he loves and with whom he is well pleased. Let's reaffirm that identity this morning as we celebrate the Lord's Supper. (Prayer - Invitation)