

## 102024Hungry – But For What?

1. Warm up: On Sunday we launched a new sermon series called “Life’s Three Greatest Temptations.” Jeff began by telling about a couple of childhood experiences of temptation. What’s one of your earliest memories of temptation?
2. Sometimes temptation can be a bit humorous, but most of the time it’s deadly serious. How we respond can make the difference between beautiful outcomes and ruinous outcomes – between a beautiful life and a ruined life. When we tackle this subject, we typically focus on temptations to break the Ten Commandments or to commit one of the so-called Seven Deadly Sins. Although those are all serious temptations, there are three others that run even deeper, which, if yielded to, create the conditions for all those other negative things to thrive. So in this new sermon series, we’re focusing on the Big Three Temptations, as described in Matthew 4:1-11. Let’s read that passage, as printed on p. 3.
  - a. Why do you think Jesus went to the wilderness to get away from everything and everyone before launching his public ministry? Have you ever deliberately done something similar? If so, tell us about it.
  - b. When Jesus went the wilderness, Satan realized this was his last chance to stop Jesus before he started. So he unleashed his most powerful temptations to try to dissuade Jesus from launching his ministry. Do you think Jesus could have renounced his calling to return home to live a normal life? Or was this all predetermined?
  - c. After forty days of fasting, Jesus was “famished.” What practical purpose is served by fasting? Have you ever tried it? Do you find it meaningful?
3. This week we’re focusing on the first Great Temptation. Matthew 4:3 says, “The tempter came and said to Jesus, ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.’” Food is a wonderful gift from God. Our physical bodies require it to survive. But Jeff said this first temptation isn’t about food alone. It’s about what it represents. Food is the ultimate creature comfort. It’s on the first level of Maslov’s Hierarchy – air, water, food, sleep, clothing, reproduction. Followed by Maslov’s second level – safety, employment, resources, health, property. These creature comforts are things we legitimately need for our physical wellbeing.
  - a. If you had to give up one of the items on Maslov’s first level, which would it be? If you could only keep one of them, which would it be?
  - b. The bread offered to Jesus was meant to remind him of how good life’s creature comforts feel, so as to lure him back home to a life focused on creature comforts, far away from the hardships of being Messiah. Try to imagine what Jesus’ life could have been like if he renounced his call and returned home to a “normal” life. What might that life have been like?

- c. Do you think it was easy or hard for Jesus to reject this First Great Temptation?
4. Jesus responds to Satan's temptation by saying, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Faced with this first great temptation – to embrace a life preoccupied with life's creature comforts – Jesus reminded himself that we are not mere physical creatures. We are above all else spirit beings temporarily housed in physical bodies. Jesus recognized that feeding his soul was far more important than feeding his body. We all face our own personal version of that same great temptation – the temptation to get so focused on bread alone, to become so focused on life's material necessities and comforts that we end up starving inner spirit. Proverbs 13:7 says, "There are some who make themselves rich, yet have nothing. There are some who make themselves poor, yet have great riches." What does this mean? Have you ever known someone who lived the first or second half of this verse? If so, tell us about them.
5. It's so easy for us to get so caught up in the material side of life that we lose all balance and end up having everything (materially speaking) without having anything – because if your spirit isn't thriving, nothing else matters. That's why it's so critical to feed our souls. And what is it that feeds our soul? Jesus tells us. "Every word that comes from the mouth of God." If we want to thrive, we've got to get in touch, and stay in touch, with the voice of God in our lives. We've got to cultivate that communal connection between our spirit and the Spirit of our Heavenly Creator. We do that the same way Jesus did, by making time to commune with God through worship and prayer and studying and meditating on the scriptures, by being part of a spiritual community of friends, a place where we can serve and give, a place where we can connect to each other. These are the practical ways we feed our spirit.
- a. Jeff gave a couple examples of how regularity in weekly worship empowers our spiritual being. How does Sunday church affect you? When skip a meal, i.e., miss a week of Sunday worship, do you feel the effect? If so, how?
  - b. Other ways to feed our spirit include personal prayer, scripture meditation, spiritual small groups, and spiritual service. Which of these most feeds your spirit? Do you feel you need more of any of these in your life? Which one?
  - c. Is there something in your material life right now that threatens to interrupt and crimp your spiritual focus? What is it? Is there a way to counteract that threat?
  - d. Overall, do you feel you have a solid balance between the material and spiritual aspects of your life? Do you feel you're doing enough to cultivate the spiritual part of your being? If not, what more do you feel called to do?

***Remember, one of Satan's best ways to take you down is to get you to be so preoccupied with your material life that you ignore your spiritual side and lose balance.  
Don't let that happen to you! Feed your spirit!***

## **Matthew 4:1-11**

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup>He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. <sup>3</sup>The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' <sup>4</sup>But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."' <sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup>saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you", and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."' <sup>7</sup>Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."' '

<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; <sup>9</sup>and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."' "

<sup>11</sup>Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.