

**May 6, 2007**

**“Temptation Toward A False ID”**

**Luke 3:21-22, 4:1-13 NLT**

21 One day when the crowds were being baptized, Jesus himself was baptized. As he was praying, the heavens opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in the form of a dove. And a voice from heaven said, "You are my beloved Son, and I am fully pleased with you."

4:1-13

Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit to go out into the wilderness, 2 where the Devil tempted him for forty days. He ate nothing all that time and was very hungry.

3 Then the Devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, change this stone into a loaf of bread."

4 But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People need more than bread for their life.' "

5 Then the Devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 The Devil told him, "I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them--because they are mine to give to anyone I please. 7 I will give it all to you if you will bow down and worship me."

8 Jesus replied, "The Scriptures say,

'You must worship the Lord your God;  
serve only him.' "

9 Then the Devil took him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! 10 For the Scriptures say,

'He orders his angels to protect and guard you.

11 And they will hold you with their hands  
to keep you from striking your foot on a stone.' "

12 Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'Do not test the Lord your God.' "

13 When the Devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came.

Jesus was raised by Joseph, a carpenter. He learned to be a carpenter and eventually took over the family business when Joseph passed away. That is, until He was thirty years old, then he closed down the family business to begin His ministry of preaching about the Kingdom of God, and healing the sick (physically, emotionally, and spiritually sick). I

guess you could say He continued in the “Home Improvement” business (too bad Joseph didn’t know how to sew, the business could have been called, “Lord & Taylor!”). Just before starting His ministry Jesus was baptized by his cousin John the Baptist, then was led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness where He was tempted by the devil for 40 days.

As we will see there were three powerful temptations and these same temptations also threaten us. They are temptations to believe what the world and our culture says makes us secure and important people. Giving in to these temptations creates a false self. They cause us to pretend we are someone we are not. When we do this we are lying to God, ourselves, and to others and we become angry, depressed, guilty people. We become people who are not healthy emotionally or spiritually. As a matter of fact, to truly be spiritually healthy, you must also be emotionally healthy. Here are the temptations toward a false ID:

1<sup>st</sup> Temptation: Performance (What do you do?)

(v3) *Then the Devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, change this stone into a loaf of bread."*

Remember Jesus had not yet begun His ministry. His true self (ID or identity) was the Son of God, but here the devil says *If you are the Son of God, then do something*. In other words the devil says to Jesus, “You’re not the Son of God, you haven’t done anything, you’re a loser! Look at you, your out here in the wilderness, your hungry, no one knows you or believes in you. What have you done? Nothing!” As if Jesus was not the Son of God unless He did something. Wasn’t He already the Son of God no matter what?

Our culture asks us the same questions. What do you do? What have you accomplished or achieved? Many times this is how we ID ourselves. To the question, who are you? We usually answer with what we do. I’m a minister, carpenter, stay at home mom etc. So many people get a sense of self - a false sense of self (a false ID of who they are) – based on how successful they are at their job, family, school, church. And if they do not feel they are performing well, they must work harder, and longer, and faster...or blame others. And what if we do find success? That earthly success can easily become our god.

2<sup>nd</sup> Temptation: Possession (What do you have?)

(vs5-7) *Then the Devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. The Devil told him, "I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them--because they are mine to give to anyone I please. I will give it all to you if you will bow down and worship me."*

Here the devil is saying to Jesus, “How can you be the Son of God? You have nothing! You don’t own anything! Therefore, you are a nobody.”

Our culture measures our worth and success the same way, by what we own. Even young children are led to believe that to feel good about themselves they must have the latest

toy(s), or own certain brand name clothing. It doesn't change as they get older, only the toys are different, they become iPods, CD's, and the clothes just become more expensive. And what about adults? We have the same temptations. Who are most important to adults? Someone with the most money, or the best education, or the most talents and awards, the one with the most beautiful body or most possessions. Many believe that possessions and talents are all that is needed for security.

3<sup>rd</sup> Temptation: Popularity (What do people think of me?)  
(vs9-11) *Then the Devil took him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say,*

*'He orders his angels to protect and guard you.  
And they will hold you with their hands  
to keep you from striking your foot on a stone.'* "

Here the devil is saying to Jesus, "No one knows you. But if you jump from the highest point in the temple, down into Jerusalem, angels will come to protect you, and you will be one popular person! People will hear about you, like you, worship you! Then you will have value and worth."

We too are tempted to place a high worth on what people think of us. Many don't realize to what depths they are motivated by trying to make it so that no one can have anything against them. It effects just about everything they say and do. They are trapped in a pretend life because of an unhealthy concern for what other people think.

So these are the temptations toward a false self: the temptation of performance that says, "I am what I do"; the temptation of possessions that says, "I am what I have"; and the temptation to popularity that says, "I am what other people think."

But where *do* we find our true self, our true ID (identity)? What is the foundation toward a true ID? I want us to go back to the baptism of Jesus in Luke 3: 21-22: *One day when the crowds were being baptized, Jesus himself was baptized. As he was praying, the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in the form of a dove. And a voice from heaven said, "You are my beloved Son, and I am fully pleased with you."*

Has Jesus done anything yet? Has He started His preaching and healing ministry at this point? Has He died on the cross yet for all of humanity? No.

Does Jesus own anything? Does He have any possessions? Is He a rich man? No

What about popularity? Does anyone know Him? Or Have any opinion of Him at this time? No.

Yet, He is affirmed by His heavenly Father. It is affirmed that He is deeply loved by God the Father. God says to Him and to you, "You are my child, I love you, I am glad you exist, I am pleased and delighted with you." You are loved and valued by God and it

doesn't matter how successful you are, how much you own, or what other people think. Because our true self does not depend on those things, our true self has its foundation in the love and acceptance of God made possible because of Jesus. God just loves you, period!

Each of the temptations we have looked at screams at us that God's love for us is not enough. Each of these temptations toward a false ID (pretending to be what we are not) have become so much a part of us that we don't even realize it. We have given in to the temptation to trust in what we do, what we have, and, or what other think rather than trusting God for who we are. God created us and sent Jesus to die for us. He wanted us to exist and to be near Him forever. He must love us very much. We must be of extreme value to Him. But to live this God-given life means building on the foundation of God's love for us. The construction of a true ID or to live a God-given life means we must be honest and faithful to our true self. This involves distinguishing who you are and not give in to the demands and voices around you. It requires that you listen to God and accept the unique calling and mission He has given you.

Everyone had expectations for Jesus. Many wanted Him to be someone other than who He was called to be. His family and friends had expectations for Him. The religious leaders had expectations for Him. Even we have expectations for Him. But He was able to withstand the enormous pressure to be what everyone else thought He should be, to be His true self.

To the temptations of performance, possessions, and popularity Jesus gave these responses:

(v4), "No! The Scriptures say, 'People need more than bread for their life.' "

(v8) Jesus replied, "The Scriptures say, 'You must worship the Lord your God; serve only him.' "

(v12) Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'Do not test the Lord your God.' "

In other words, surrendering your will to the God who loves you. That is the only way of finding your true self. You are deeply loved; You are deeply treasured by God. Soaking that love in enables us to surrender to God's will. Find true worth and value in the unconditional, unlimited, free love of God in Christ.