

(Devotional #6) Jesus in Quarantine

Opening Scripture: “Be still and know that I am God” – Psalm 46:10

QUARANTINE! Merriam-Webster defines ‘quarantine’ as: (verb) “to isolate from normal relations or communication, as in a ship arriving in port, suspected of carrying a contagious disease; to detain or isolate.”

There are numerous examples in the Bible of quarantines. Most of them have to do with contagious diseases. Did you know that? Let me give you a few examples:

Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, “Why do we sit here until we die? – 2 Kings 7:3

King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death, and he lived in a separate house, being a leper, for he was cut off from the house of the LORD. And Jotham his son was over the king’s house judging the people of the land. – 2 Chronicles 26:21

As He (Jesus) entered the village, ten leprous men, who stood at a distance, met him – Luke 17:12

Not all quarantines in the Bible were related to diseases and not all quarantines were imposed on people because of sicknesses. Some were self-imposed for a very different reason! In Galatians we read about one of these ‘self-quarantines’ –

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace to reveal his Son in me, so I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither did I go up to Jerusalem to those, who were apostles before me ... but I went into Arabia and returned again unto Damascus. Then after THREE YEARS I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days – Galatians 1:15-18

In this case, Paul went into Arabia, i.e., into the desert – into the wilderness – and there he conferred not with men ... not even with the other apostles ... but with the Lord Himself. Paul spent three years learning how to reinterpret the Old Testament in light of the Gospel Jesus had revealed to him on the road to Damascus. (I have no doubt a great part of that time was spent pouring over Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12.)

Warren Wiersbe said of this time of self-isolation: “Paul gave himself to study, prayer, and meditation, and met with the Lord alone” (*The Wiersbe Bible Study Series: Galatians, by Warren Wiersbe, Pg. 37*). Why didn’t Paul go straight to Jerusalem? Why did God direct him into sequestration in, of all places, the desert? He did it because Paul needed to separate himself from his former life, spend time in prayer and meditation, and as I mentioned previously, he needed to learn how to read the Old Testament in light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to which he now was committed.

LESSON #1 – God often uses quarantines to prepare men and women for service to the Lord.

We could mention two other times God used a form of sequestration to teach and prepare his people for what lay ahead: (1) Moses spent forty-years in Midian after fleeing from Egypt before he ever spoke with God at the Burning Bush, and following the Exodus, (2) Israel wandered in isolation in the desert, where Joshua and Caleb were prepared for their roles in the Conquest.

But today I want to focus on another sequestration ... another ‘quarantine,’ if you will, and the account of this quarantine is found in **Luke 4:1-14**. (Now please take a moment and read the story that is recorded in these verses.)

About the time Jesus turned thirty-years old, this carpenter from Galilee put down his tools, hugged his family goodbye, and he walked to the Jordan River in Judea, where He was baptized by John the Baptist. There heaven opened, and the Spirit descended upon Jesus, anointing him for service; then followed a divine voice from heaven, saying: “***This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*** (Luke 3:22). After this, in what may be *the grand non-sequitur of the New Testament*, we read in ***Luke 4:1***: “***Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the Wilderness (the desert) to be tempted.*** Fully aware of his mission, and full of the Spirit, Jesus voluntarily fasted in isolation for forty-days and nights, a time God used to prepare Jesus for His earthly ministry.

LESSON #2 – God has set limits on this present quarantine and the toll the Coronavirus can take on the world. We may not know what those limits are, just as Job did not know them when he was suffering – but be assured ... ***It is God who sets the limits, not Satan.***

It is important to note that it was the Holy Spirit, who led Jesus into the desert; it wasn't Satan (*although Satan soon will appear there*). This is important because it assures us that what happened in the Judean Wilderness during those forty-days was controlled by the Sovereign Hand of God, and therefore, there was a divine purpose in every event and test that took place there.

Well what did happen during those forty-days? We are told in verse 2: “***For forty-days Jesus was tempted by the devil ... and He ate nothing during those days.***” Well that is the first difference in Jesus' quarantine and our quarantine (“***He ate nothing during those days***” – *Just know that a sense of humor is important in dealing with any quarantine.*) Hunger not only makes us weak physically, it also weakens our moral and spiritual resistance. We become vulnerable to anything that might provide relief from the present distress.

So, God allowed Jesus to be tempted. Scripture tells us in the New Testament Book of Hebrews, “***For we do not have a high priest, who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin***” – ***Hebrews 4:15***. Remember, a ‘test’ and a ‘temptation’ are two sides of the same coin, so whether we are tempted on the level of our morality, or put into a set of circumstances that are troubling (*like right now*), the remedy is the same. So let's see how Jesus handled Satan's attacks.

First, it is important for us to know what Jesus knew, namely, that Satan is NOT co-equal with God. The secular conception of God and Satan is misguided, sometimes depicted as an ‘angel’ on one shoulder and an almost-cute ‘devil’ on the other, as if one is the equal of the other. If you recall, Satan had to have God's permission to attack Job (*see Job 1:12; 2:6*), and most certainly he had to have God's permission to attack Jesus. Note again, ***God set a limit on the timeframe available for Satan to trouble Job***, because at the end of it all, Job was restored fully. And God limits the extent to which Satan can attack his faithful servants.

Luke 4:3 – And the devil said to Him, “***If you are the son of God, tell this stone to become bread.***”

LESSON #3 – Satan knows our weaknesses and he plans his attacks accordingly.

In this case, he knew Jesus was hungry. I wonder how long Satan waited to tempt Jesus in this way? I bet it didn't take place on day one! Based on what we know about the wiles of the devil, he probably waited until Jesus was weak and devoid of strength (*i.e., weak in His humanity*). He likely waited until it would be easy to rationalize the act of turning a stone into bread. It was at that time of greatest weakness that Satan attacked!

This temptation was not about hunger; hunger was Satan's tool, but the essence of the temptation was to lead Jesus to doubt His Father's Word, God's love for Him, and God's provision for His physical and spiritual needs. He had every right, Satan suggested, to use his own divine power to supply what the Father had not. But from the beginning, Jesus had come *"to do the Father's will,"* not to satisfy His own needs – Obedience to the Father took priority over everything else. We see this when, as a young boy, Jesus engaged the Rabbis in the temple – (*John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38*). It was Jesus' absolute trust and submission to the Father that Satan sought to shatter.

SO HOW DID JESUS RESPOND? He responded by citing **THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD**, and in doing so, He defeated Satan and the temptation went away. Jesus quoted a verse that described God's care for Israel, when the Israelites were wandering in the desert: *"He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna that you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you understand that **MAN DOES NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE BUT MAN LIVES BY EVERYTHING THAT PRECEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE LORD**"* – Deuteronomy 8:3.

By quoting this verse, Jesus declared that it is better to obey God, and wait for **HIS** provision, than to satisfy ourselves. It comes down to *'self-reliance'* versus *'reliance on God'*. We all struggle with this in difficult times. *"If God really loves me, why is this happening?"*

Let's look at another example: Luke 4:5-8 *"And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time."* Most likely Satan brought into Jesus' mind a perverse form of something Jesus already knew. Jesus was well-aware of the kingdoms of the world; it was He who established them. Daniel acknowledged this when he interpreted the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar: *"It is He (the LORD) who removes kings and who establishes kings – Daniel 2:21^B*. The kingdoms of the world already were His. *He is the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:16)!* What could Satan add to what Jesus already possessed? Nothing whatsoever!

LESSON #4 – When Jesus was tempted, he relied on Scripture to defeat Satan. We must be aware of how Satan tempts us and follow Jesus' example when we are tempted.

By now, we should see there is a pattern at work. Satan's attacks are directed at what he perceives to be our weaknesses. Satan had attempted and failed to use **hunger** to disarm Jesus and cause Him to sin. When that didn't work, Satan tried another tactic. Defeated by Jesus' application of Deuteronomy 8:3, Satan next tried to appeal to **the sin of power-lust** by offering Jesus the kingdoms of the earth. But Jesus defeated him once again with Scripture: *"You shall fear only the LORD your God and YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY"* – Deuteronomy 6:13; Luke 4:8.

Jesus saw this for what it was: an attempt to get Him to turn from faithfulness to His Father to depending on a promise ... (*a lie*) ... made by Satan.

As the King of kings, Jesus was the heir to **THE KINGDOM**, and it was that divine right to which Satan appealed in this 2nd temptation. *'Why should you wait for what is rightfully yours? You deserve to have it now! Why be a servant when you can reign as a king? I am offering to you NOW what the father is withholding.'* **The choice was, THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD NOW ... OR THE CROSS!**

Jesus knew what awaited Him; the cross was not a surprise. What lay ahead would be murderously difficult, excruciatingly painful, and agonizing. But it needn't be. Satan offered Jesus the world on a silver platter, with no suffering, no struggle, and no sacrifice, and no cross ... just a

little compromise. Satan always comes to us this way. He counterfeits what God gives, and he offers it at a lower cost.

Now let's look at the third and final temptation – It is the temptation to use His position as the Son of God for His own ends. ***“Jump off the highest pinnacle of the temple,”*** says Satan, ***“for God is obligated to be true to His Word and He will save you.”***

We can paraphrase Satan's third temptation in this way: *“So, you have entrusted your life to God, have you? That's good. I can see you are a man of faith. I also can see that you have a deep respect for Scripture. You trust in God and in His Word. So why not take Him at his Word? He has promised to protect you, so let Him do it! Show the world how much you trust God.”*

So, what's wrong with a little ***‘pinnacle-jumping’*** if it demonstrates God's power? Well, it's called ***presumption***. The test was to see if Jesus would draw all people to himself by relying on ***sensationalism*** – or would He go to the cross, by way of obedience to His Father?

Does this remind you of anything? It reminds me of ***Matthew 27:40***: ***“You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days – save yourself. Come down from the cross!”*** Or perhaps worse, the words of the crucified thief in ***Luke 23:39***: ***“Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”*** Of course, that it the one thing Jesus could not do; He could not save Himself and us too.

Isn't it interesting that the temptation Satan sets forth in Luke, and the words of those who crucified Jesus, and the words of the unrepentant thief, are essentially the same? Jesus saw through the ruse and once again applied the Scriptures: ***“YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST AS YOU TESTED HIM AT MASSAH” – Deuteronomy 6:16; Luke 4:12.***

The story of Jesus in the desert ends with the thing we should take from our own experiences in quarantine: ***“When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time. And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread throughout all the surrounding district” – Luke 4:13-14.***

LESSON #5 – Apart from the Word of God and the indwelling Holy Spirit, no man is a match for Satan. Paul encourages us in Ephesians, ***“Be not drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Holy Spirit” – Ephesians 5:18.***

Satan tempts us in the same ways he tempted Jesus. He tries to get us to distrust God so that we attempt to solve life's problems ourselves. We see here the importance of knowing Scripture, for the Word of God defeats Satan. Scripture memory is crucial. Without it, we are destined to yield to temptation and miss out on God's blessings – ***John 5:24.***

As we wait out the current crisis, missing our connections with our friends and family, and wondering how and when this will end, spend as much time as possible looking into your Bibles, thinking about your relationship with Jesus, and praying for everyone affected by this pandemic.

This too shall end! How do I know this? I know it because I know the one, who controls all things. So, during this time when we are in our homes, ***focus*** on the Word of God, ***realize*** we have the indwelling of the same Holy Spirit, and ***cherish*** the fact that we are the daughters and sons of the King of kings and Lord of lords ... our Sovereign God.