

The Temptation of Jesus Christ

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Main Thing

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the gospel of Luke chapter 4. Now, as you're turning to Luke chapter 4, if you're here today as a guest or a visitor, or maybe you're worshipping with us for the first time in some time, I want to welcome you to a very strategic study through the gospel of Luke. You may be questioning, why would you use the term strategic? Well, the gospel of Luke, as any other book of the Bible, typically, when you walk through them or you study them, you begin at the beginning. Makes perfect sense. And within the gospel of Luke, you would begin at what we know as the manger scene, the Christmas story, which we heard celebrated today in music, and then you would make your way through the life, the ministry, ultimately, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, over the last few months of life, we've been walking through the gospel of Luke somewhat unorthodox. We've been going at it backwards. We actually began with the empty tomb. We began with Mount Calvary, and we're actually making our way to the manger scene and the reason for doing so is as you read through the gospel of Luke, every message that Jesus preached, every miracle that he ever performed, those that were observing, those that were listening, would have naturally questioned to themselves, "Is this really the one the prophets spoke of? Is this really the one the priests have been praying for? Is this the Messiah that humanity has hoped for since time beginning?" You and I today, we don't have to question, we don't have to be curious. We have 2,000 years of confirmation because the tomb of Jesus Christ is still empty today and so, as a believer in Jesus Christ, today we have the privilege of walking through the gospel of Luke with the resurrection as our lens.

Today we come to chapter 4, one of the most well-known stories in all the gospels, the temptation of Jesus Christ, and unlike previous weeks, we don't have to worry about what people thought about the event because there's nobody there. It's just Jesus and as we're going to see in a moment, Satan in the wilderness. But what we do have the opportunity to do today is look at this famous story, look at this event in its natural context and we're going to do so in a moment, but we're also going to peel away some layers because what we're going to discover today is the story is so much more than putting Satan in his proper place. The story is so much more than Jesus the sinless one rejecting sin. We're going to discover today that our eternity, our forever is actually at stake in 40 days in the wilderness.

So in Luke chapter 4 beginning in verse 1 today, it says,

1 And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. 3 And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. 4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. 5 And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. 7 If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. 8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. 9 And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: 10 For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: 11 And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. 12 And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. 13 And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season. 14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. 15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

Again, this is a story that for many of us is somewhat or very familiar. Jesus is in the wilderness for 40 days, 40 nights. Satan comes and tempts him. He rejects the temptation. He leaves in power and what we know as the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ essentially commences and begins, but that entire ministry is hinged on these 15 verses. Today, all that we know of hope, all that we know of a resurrected life, all that we know of eternity is at stake in the midst of a Judean wilderness.

Today, though, as we often do, I just want to kind of peel the layers. We'll walk through this passage. And I want to begin by an interesting aspect of this passage. Whose idea was this to begin with? Notice what it says in verse 1. It says, the Spirit led him. Now that may be uncomfortable for some of you, but we're going to talk about the baptism of Jesus next week when we walk into chapter 3 and there you see the Father saying, "This is my Son. Receive and hear of him," and the Spirit descending like a dove. The Bible makes it very clear that the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, purposefully drove Jesus into the wilderness to have this experience. Now, before you struggle with that, allow me to remind you in Hebrews chapter 4 verse 15, it says that Jesus Christ, he endured, he experienced every temptation known to man. Every temptation. Now that being said, you just read in this passage that being tempted for 40 days, verse 2, I think one of the great points of clarification that we need to make today is that Satan didn't just simply tempt him with three temptations. It says that he tempted him for all those 40 days. And why is

this critical for you and I? I don't know if it's happened in your life. It has happened in mine. I'll be transparent and I will confess to you, there have been times where I've been struggling, there have been times that I've been walking difficult waters, there are times that I've been having, for lack of better terms, doubts and at those times, maybe I'm the only one, we just kind of look up and say, "God, do you even understand what I'm walking through? Do you even understand what I'm struggling? Do you even understand?" Because we see ourselves so far removed, not only from the person of Jesus, but the context of the story but according to Hebrews 4, he endured every single temptation known to man. So the next time, the next time you're on your knees crying out to God and say, "God, do you understand?" Do you know what the answer is? Yes. The next time you say, "God, do you get this?" You know what the answer is? Yes. The Spirit of God drove Jesus into the wilderness because for him to shed his blood and raise from the grave from every sin, every temptation, and every struggle, he had to personally understand what you and I walk through every single moment of our life. Jesus was not there to see, is he going to pull it off or not. Jesus was there because he knows we can't pull it off and he needed to do so on our behalf.

The second aspect is not only who drives him there, but what we discover here in that passage is where he goes. Now it says he drives him, quote verse 1, into the wilderness. Now this is where it's a little bit of struggle for those of us here in East Alabama. When you hear the term wilderness, you think, "Oh, is it deer season or turkey season? Which one am I in here," right? Don't think pine trees, don't think brush. In fact, in the Bible, the concept or the idea of a wilderness is a desert area. Think sand dunes, think heat, think hot days, cold nights. But it's much more than the weather patterns. In fact, when you take a survey of the scriptures, the concept of the idea of the wilderness is a very critical concept. In fact, in the book of Numbers chapter 13 and 14, we discover that the Israelites find themselves 40 years wandering in the wilderness, a place of great destitute. I mean, think about it, we have a hard time today just in our culture when we take a long trip, we plan for where we're gonna stop and get food. Where are you gonna stop and get food in a place that has no place to stop and get food? But what did God do? Every single day, God supernaturally provided what the Bible refers to as manna for them. He provided shoes that would not wear out, clothes that would not wear out, and food that showed up supernaturally.

The reason this is important is that the Spirit drove Jesus into a place that is historically maybe the greatest example of God's provision for his people, the wilderness. But it's not just in the book of Numbers. In fact, we're gonna talk more about this in just a moment. When you get to the book of Revelation, that last book in the Bible in chapter 12, there is a series of verses where it talks about in the day's future the people of God experiencing what we might call a second wilderness experience. You say, "Second wilderness experience?" Yes. In Revelation chapter 12, it says that the people of God, this is the exact quote, went to her wilderness for three and a half years. And what does God do in Revelation chapter 12? He supernaturally, not for 40 years, but for three and a half years, he provides for them. He nourishes them. And so in a place that physically or optically is the most destitute and the least desirous, we see God doing the most to provide for his people and such we have Jesus in the wilderness.

We often question, why would that be the place, and there's any place he could have gone for 40 days and 40 nights, but as it says here, he was an hungered. There was no opportunity for human provision. There was no opportunity for natural provision. Everything had to be of God and of a supernatural flavor. And then there's the "when." Forty days and forty nights. Surely that's a number and that's a concept that is familiar to you. Why? Because in the book of Genesis, the first time it shows up, what do we discover? Noah's flood, it rained for 40 days and 40 nights. In the book of Exodus, when Moses goes on Mount Sinai, he's up there for 40 days and 40 nights. And the reason this is important for us today is anytime you see God do something in a term of 40 days, it is ultra significant. In fact, it has a significance beyond measure. It doesn't happen often, and when it does, it is of a very serious nature.

So what do we have? We have the Spirit of God taking Jesus Christ into a place where there is no natural physical provision to demonstrate for us how God alone can provide for us in a way that is supernatural, miraculous, and unique in and of itself which begs the two questions that you knew we'd get to: what's actually happening in the wilderness, more importantly, why is this story actually relevant for my today and tomorrow? So let's talk about the "what" here. One thing that we discover in this passage is there's some precedence. Notice what it says in verse 3. It says, the devil said to him, "If thou be the Son of God." Now, you know and I know that he knew who he was. I mean, in fact, it's much like the book of Genesis chapter 3 You remember when Adam and Eve fall into sin and God comes to them and says, "Where are you?" You do realize God knew exactly where they were geographically, right? What he was questioning isn't the fact of the matter but the "why" of the matter. He says, "If you are the Son of God." This is the way, this is the means by which Satan operates in every aspect of our life. In fact, if you go back to the book of Genesis again, before Adam and Eve fell, before humanity fell into sin, do you remember what the very first statement that old serpent the devil asked us? He says, "Yea hath God said." In other words, the precedence, and by the way, you know, if it works, don't fix it, right? If it's not broken, don't fix it. What do we discover here? Satan's methodology always works. You say, "What do you mean it always works?" Every temptation, every struggle, every doubt that you've ever had in your life can be summed up in him questioning who God is or what his word is in your life every single time. It's never failed him except in the case of Jesus in the wilderness.

So what does Satan do? He comes to humanity in the garden of Eden and basically he asked, "Did God really mean what he's saying? Did he say what he meant?" So what did humanity do? We began to question. "Did God really mean that? Can we look at it this way? Can we look at it that way?" We refused to take it at surface value and look where it got us. So what's the precedence here? He is again questioning Jesus, the Messiah. By the way, his Creator, and he's questioning him saying, "Are you really here to do what you claim you're here to do?" That's a powerful precedence.

So what's the process? What does he do? Well, there are three temptations that we know of. I mentioned earlier, it says that he tempted him for 40 days. We have the big three here quote at the end after he says, he was hungry. Now if you want to do a parallel study

in the gospel of Matthew chapter 4, you'll discover that the second and the third temptations are actually reversed in Matthew chapter 4. Don't panic because Luke begins his gospel by saying he set forth a chronology of the events. Three respective temptations. The first one, take a rock, turn it into bread. The second one to bow down and worship and inherit the kingdoms of the world. The third to jump off the pinnacle of the temple and allow the angels to be the cushion. So what is the process here? What is taking place? And allow me to walk you through 1 John chapter 2 verses 15 through 17. This is essentially a nutshell or a synopsis of the temptations of everybody's life. Now remember, every temptation at its core is questioning who God is or his word in our life but if you want to dissect it a little bit, 1 John chapter 2:15 through 17 says love not the world nor the things in the world for the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life will get us every single time. And what do you discover? That here these specific three temptations Jesus actually refutes and resists, if you allow me to say it, those three categorizations of temptation.

Let's begin with the first one, 40 days, no food, no water, no natural or supernatural nourishment. What's he saying? He says, "Why don't you take this rock and turn it into bread?" I don't know about you, but the desire or the lust of my flesh will be an 11 on a scale of 10. I mean, I get hungry after four hours. Can you imagine 40 days? In other words, there was a desire, there was a compelling of the flesh, just like you and I experience on a regular day, not just with literal food, but other items that are desirous to us, they're attracted to us. In fact, you go back into Genesis chapter 3, you can do the same parallel with Adam and Eve. What did it say? That it looked good to eat, is one of the things they said about the, quote, forbidden fruit, the lust of the flesh.

The second one, this one's interesting. Notice what Satan says to him. He says, "I will give you the kingdoms, the powers of the world, which are delivered to me to give to whoever I want." Now does that bother you somewhat? It shouldn't because in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, you know what it says? That Satan is the God of this world. If you don't believe me, just watch the news. He is masterminding, he is the puppet master, if you can allow me to say, behind so many activities, decisions, etc. He comes to Jesus and he says, "Here's the deal. You can have it all." Now, I'm not a real fan, there's a Bible translation, quote-unquote, out there called "The Message." Some of y'all are familiar. It's a paraphrase. It's kind of the Bible in novel form. But I like how it translates this passage. Satan comes to Jesus and says, "You can have the kingdoms of the world. Lock, stock and barrel, they're all yours." I love how it puts that picture, that imagery, of everything. "Only if you will," quote, "worship me." Is that not the pride of life, to have it all? You know, Rockefeller once was asked, how much is enough money? He said, "Just a little bit more." Is that not who we are? No matter what we experience, no matter the accolades and the successes of life, our pride gets us and we want just a little bit more.

And then there's the third one, to jump off the pinnacle of the temple, to allow the angels to be a quote unquote heavenly cushion. The lust of the eyes. Can you imagine the spectacle that that would have been? I mean, you think about it today, even in our human context, when somebody's gonna do some type of supernatural feat, whether it's walking a tightrope across Niagara Falls or jumping a motorcycle over a fountain, whatever it is,

we all show up because we know deep down inside, there's somebody going, "Hey guys, watch this." We're attracted to that. The lust of the eyes. Can you imagine the buzz it would have created? Can you imagine the uproar to have somebody literally falling off the top of the temple and to be caught by a pair of angels before he hit the bottom?

When you look at the process, what do you discover? You discover that, yes, for 40 days hindered everything that you and I could ever experience in our lives but you also discover that categorically, everything that our flesh craves, everything that our eyes desire, and everything that our pride wants, he systematically and very chronologically said, "No, no, and no." So what's the power? This is kind of the key to it all. How'd he do it? I mean, I know, I know we could get in this big theological debate. He's God, we're not. But you do realize he was 100% God, 100% flesh. You take any percentage less of either, you got neither, right? How'd he do it? What was the power? Notice what Jesus says over and over and over again. Notice in verse 4, "It is written." In fact, if you have what we call a red letter Bible, the letters of Jesus that are in red, you'll notice at the response of every single one of these three respective temptations, Jesus always answers with quote, "It is written or it is said." You do realize that the author of scripture held himself to the veracity of scripture. In other words, the power to resist, the power to reject, the power to stay fortitude is in the word of God. Let that be a lesson to each and every one of us. Jesus did not say this, now work with me. Jesus didn't say, "Do you know who I am?" Jesus didn't say, "Seriously, you know I outrank you a hundred fold." What did he say? "It is written." In other words, Jesus Christ, tired in the flesh, exhausted in the flesh, worn out in the flesh, said the only way to get through this, "It is written."

Now ladies and gentlemen, that is what you and I know as the temptation story. It's a great story, it's a wonderful story but we have to ask the question of why. Why is this story, or why could it become so personal for us? I want to go into one of those areas that I like to say, could it be? In other words, I want to look at this passage as we close in just somewhat of a different angle. Could it be that it's more than the lust of the flesh, more than the lust of the eyes? Could it be that it's more than the pride of life? Could it be that it is more than a rock to bread, or being caught by some angels before hitting the ground? Let's talk about some precedents for a moment. One thing you may not realize is that every single temptation that Satan presents him that we're aware of that is in print, every single one of them is actually an account of something that Jesus will one day do in the future. You may not have realized that. It's not just about the lust of the flesh though that is real. It's not just about the lust of the eyes though that is valid. Every single one of them.

Allow me to take in quickness, let me take these three passages, kind of unpack them for a moment. They all come from the book of Revelation. They all come from that future concept, all those things that we call end times eschatology, whatever words you prefer. All three of these come from that genre, that category, that area of study. Revelation chapter 12, I already mentioned it. There is an event that is mentioned in the future, days from now, where the people of God find themselves running from whom you and I collectively call the Antichrist. Now, interestingly, the term Antichrist is not even found in the book of Revelation, but there's a term that may even be worse than that, he's called

the beast, is what he's called. Nonetheless, there in Revelation 12, they are running from him. You know what the Bible says in Revelation chapter 12, 12 through 14? For three and a half years, In the wilderness, they run. What does God do? He supernaturally feeds them. Now, don't get me wrong. I realize Jesus was in the flesh. He was hungered in this passage. It says that he was. But do you find it coincidental that the only miracle of Jesus that's in all four gospels is what we know as the multiplication of the bread? Isn't that interesting? And here Satan says, "Okay, in a place where they have no food, provide the food." It's not just something that God had done days past, it's also recorded as something he's going to do days future.

So let's go to the second one. Satan comes to him and he offers him all the kingdoms of the world. We've already dealt with the fact that he had the authority to do so because he's called the God of this world. How does that impact things? In the book of Revelation, there are a series of judgments that are pronounced, that are proclaimed. We have the famous, you know, the seals, the seven seals. We have the trumpets. We have the vials. When in chapter 11, we find ourselves with that sixth trumpet and I'm not here to get in the weeds of all the judgments that are here and there, but here's what's fascinating, in Revelation chapter 11 verse 15, this statement is made, "The kingdoms of this world have now become the kingdoms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." I got news for you, Satan was tempting him with something that was assured and going to happen. In other words, we're starting to see a pattern here. We're starting to see a pattern that it's so much more than the flesh, the eyes, and the pride of life, that it's possible that Satan is actually tempting him, listen to me, to replace what we know as the first coming with the second coming, providing food supernaturally, inheriting the kingdoms of the world.

You say, "Well, what about that last one? I mean jumping off the the pinnacle of the temple. How can that fit into the future?" What you may or may not realize is that when God orchestrated the building of that famous building there in Jerusalem, its architecture, its design was very strategic. In other words, it wasn't just in a specific place for a specific reason, it had a specific structure. And if you've never been to what we know as the Holy Land, you've never experienced just a normal day there, it's kind of somewhat elevated and the cloud cover most days is somewhat depressed. What I mean by that is that the temple was actually designed to appear from the outside to reach into the heavens. In other words, the sacrifices that were offered, the prayers that were given, everything that happened at the temple wasn't just to leave it there, it was pictured with their eyes to go directly into the throne room. Now do you understand over time why so many churches have tall buildings? Why do we have steeples and spires and these giant concourses of buildings? It's because it's taken this concept that it's so much more than the songs we sing and the words we speak, we believe that when we gather, we go directly into the presence of God.

You say, "Well, what does that have to do with the temptation? What does that have to do with potentially the book of Revelation and all that?" Revelation chapter 19, verse 11, one of the most famous passages in all of the Bible. What does it say? There's a day coming where out of the clouds, Jesus will descend. Isn't that interesting? On most days

in Jerusalem, when that temple was there, the clouds would have encompassed the top part of that temple. In other words, I would argue that there's potentially something even more under the surface here because guess what? There's coming a day in the future where Jesus is supernaturally going to feed his people. There's coming a day in the future where he's going to rightfully inherit the kingdoms of the world. And there's coming a day in the future where the clouds are going to open up and he's going to descend and he's going to touch foot on planet Earth. All of those things are quote, written in the word of God which means this, there was another process that was happening. Not just the process of the lust of the flesh, the eyes, and the pride of life, but the process, listen to me, because this is important for our everyday lives, of doing the right thing at the wrong time. I believe that could be the most subtle and most effective temptation that the devil ever uses on us when we know what we're one day going to experience, when we know one day what we should experience, but we can't walk through trust in the Lord or delayed gratification. I mean, think about it, can you look at the options here? There is the crown of Calvary, and there's the crown of the second coming. There is the blood that is shed on his own cross, versus the blood that is shed at the battle of Armageddon. You could not have two events that are more distantly different from one another and yet what does Satan say? He says, "Hey, all these things you're going to do one day. Why don't we just go ahead and take care of that today?"

Let me put this in practical illustration. We've all seen this at some point and unfortunately, it happened in the last week again. Typically what I'm gonna express to you happens on the defensive side of the football game. You do know that most defensive players are not used to scoring. You realize that, right? It's just not a part of their job description and I love what John Madden...by the way, it's John Madden's quote, he used to say, "I love when a fat man scores." Y'all remember when he used to say that? You know, when one of these big linemen, even a cornerback, the pick six, that's what they do, it's not a common occurrence to score. Now, I want you to know straight up, playing on the defensive side of the ball, I never personally scored playing defense, never did. Okay, so I don't know what it feels like, but I can imagine. Can you imagine what is going through the mind of these linebackers? They spent their whole life preventing people from scoring, and all of a sudden, they can see the end zone. They can hear the crowd. Their eyes get big. And it happened again this week, a guy was running, he started celebrating before he got to the end zone and he dropped the ball. See, I don't know if you know this, but until the ball crosses the plane, you don't have a touchdown. You know what you have? A fumble is what you have. It's a self-inflicted fumble. And it happens on an unfortunately somewhat regular basis, people celebrating before they're supposed to.

Can I get serious for a moment? I'm gonna take it beyond the field. You know one of the plagues of our culture today? We've got people that are celebrating marriage before they're married. I could go for about 30 minutes on a whole lot of subject matters Why? Because we know that'll be a part of our lives in six months. We know that we've got... I got one for you, one of the most famous Christmas movies, I'm not gonna quote it because I'll get emails about it, is about a guy who spends his Christmas bonus before he gets it. Y'all know the movie, right? Just buy Clark something nice when you're at the

store, and that's the movie. What happens? Celebrated before it was a reality. One of the slyest, most subtle, most, shall we say, effective temptations is to get us to do the right thing at the wrong time.

Now don't get me wrong, I think Jesus rejected the lust of the flesh. I think he rejected the lust of the eyes. I think he rejected the pride of life. But one of the things you may have never seen of this passage is every one of those temptations, every one of them was also prophetically relevant to something that was going to happen at what you and I know as the second coming. So let's talk about power for just a moment. You and I don't possess any. We don't possess the power to eradicate the sin out of our life. We don't possess the ability to eradicate the rebellion against God out of our lives. We don't have it. That's why 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 18 says this, the preaching of the cross of Jesus Christ is to those who reject it, it's foolishness, but to those of us that believe, it is the power of God. Now, ladies and gentlemen, I don't want to ever be guilty of reading too much into scripture but because of the slyness of this temptation, I am going to read this into it: your eternity and my eternity is at stake in these 40 days in the wilderness because every temptation that was offered is written in the word of God to one day happen in the future. The right thing at the, quote, wrong time.

Where would we be without the cross? Where would we be without the empty tomb? According to the Bible, we would be dead in our sins and our trespasses and the power of the cross is that Jesus, after 40 days of being, quote, can I say this, he is wore out. He says, "You know what? I know what's written. I know what's coming. But I am still gonna go to that cross. I am still gonna shed my blood. I am still gonna exchange my life for theirs because they don't have the power to do it themselves and I'm the only one qualified to do it." Is Luke chapter 4 an expose on rejecting temptation? Absolutely. But it's also a thesis on the love, the grace, and the goodness that Jesus Christ has for each and every one of us, that he was willing to do what only he could do because we didn't have the capacity to do it ourselves.

Let's pray with our heads bowed, our eyes closed. Today as we come to this time of service, this time of decision, you may be that individual here in person, you may be on the other side of the screen or the radio station, you may be that person that for whatever reason you come to this juncture, this time in life, and there's never been a time where either A) you have sensed the need for the desire for Jesus in your life but the Bible says that the wages of our sin is death. There is not a one of us here, there's not a one of us online who has the ability or the power to receive forgiveness or absolution of our sins on our own merit. That's why the Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Not whoever becomes religious. Not whoever starts this or stops that. It says whoever calls on the name of the Lord. Maybe today's the day that you finally call on the name of the Lord. When I mention calling out, this isn't about reading a script. This isn't about saying what I would say or somebody else would say. This is your heart's cry that you've got a sin problem that you have an inability and a lack of power to get rid of yourself and that you need Jesus to do so for you. If that's you today, would you cry out to him? Not out loud in your own words, but your heart's cry might sound something like this, "God today. I recognize I got a sin problem. God, I have been places I had no

business being. I've done things I should have never done. I've said words I should have never spoken. And God, you and you alone know the thoughts that I've had that are so contrary to you. Your Bible's very clear, the reason or the result of my sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. God, today I believe. I believe I got a sin problem that only Jesus can solve. And so God today, the best way I know how, I'm crying out to you. God, I believe. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he came on my behalf. God today, I believe that Jesus loved me so much that as we read in Luke 4, he rejected every form of temptation and lived a sinless life. God, I believe that when he was nailed to the cross, he was being held by the pain and the punishment of my sin and my transgression. And God today, I believe that three days later when Jesus rose from the grave, he made it possible, he made it feasible for my sin to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God today, I don't have the answers to the issues and the struggles of most of what's happening in this old world, but there's one thing I know, I've got a sin problem that only Jesus can fix. So the best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me. I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed, our eyes still closed, you might be that person today for the very first time you cried out to Jesus. In a moment, I'm going to pray. We're going to stand and sing together, and I want to invite you wherever you're seated just to step out and step forward. I'll be down here. We'll have others as well. We'd love the opportunity just to celebrate with you, to pray with you, and to pray for you. Maybe you're here today saying, "Well, pastor, I'm already a believer. I've already got that covered." But maybe you're like the individuals on our campus today that are going to walk through those baptismal waters. Maybe it's an issue of obedience today that you need to talk with somebody about, or maybe just like every week, you're that individual, that couple, that family that says, "This is my church home. I need to talk to somebody. I'm making that a more permanent thing." Maybe you're just hurting. Maybe you're just struggling. You need somebody to pray with you and pray for you. Whatever the decision, whatever the response, we want you to know we're here to celebrate and we're here to pray with you and pray for you.

Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, God, our minds cannot wrap around the extent of the love that you have for us, the grace that you desire to bestow upon us and, Lord, today what you were willing to reject so as to be qualified to save us. So Jesus, today whatever it is that you spoke to us through your word, may we simply honor you by responding to it. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.