

Fed by Grace | Food in the Gospels

Instant Food (Short-cuts)

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Luke 4.1-15

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness ² for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry. ³ And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." ⁴ And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE.'" ⁵ And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷ "Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours." ⁸ Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'" ⁹ And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; ¹⁰ for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU TO GUARD YOU,' ¹¹ and, 'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'" ¹² And Jesus answered and said to him, "It is said, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"

¹³ *When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.*

¹⁴ *And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. ¹⁵ And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.*

Last week we began a series that (hopefully) we'll explore until Easter... We started it last year during this season and that is, the theme of FOOD in the four Gospels. Jesus Christ is often found at gatherings where food is served (in fact His detractors called Him a glutton and a drunkard) and He teaches and relates to all kinds of people AT these meals and get-togethers...these events afford Him big opportunities to see us as we are...and to speak into our lives.

And food is often used to illustrate a point about the Kingdom of God and the Good News, which were the main ideas in Jesus Christ's teaching.

Today, a very famous episode, the Temptation of Christ and IN this episode there's a significant reference to food. Bread symbolizes our physical needs and Jesus Christ is urged to perform a miracle in order to satisfy His own hunger after a long fast: "turn this stone into *bread*".

This introduces us to a character who shows up intermittently throughout the Bible (starting in Genesis Ch. 3) and especially IN the Gospels, that is the devil. What *does* the Bible teach about this being and are we, *in the modern world*, supposed to believe in a personification of evil ...or the opposite of God... Satan or the devil – what *ARE* we supposed to DO with that? AND if evil or an evil power does exist... *are we to think this being may be doing things in the world* (even in our own lives) and are we supposed to do something about it? Can we?

I want to look at 1) The Temptation - Jesus Christ's and Ours 2) A Look *Below* the Surface (symbols and significance we may miss) 3) Real Help this text supplies

As we look at this temptation episode we could analyze it like we would any plot or narrative... And we could begin with the characters.

Immediately there are two – Jesus Christ and the devil. He's also called Satan and "the tempter" in Mark's and Matthew's accounts. He is (in the scope of the whole Bible) a fallen angel...and not an uncreated being...not the opposite of God...not the brother of Jesus...not a pitchfork, not red, no horns...etc.

It appears, and really the Bible doesn't say a lot about this figure, it appears that he is the leader of the fallen angels or spirits that are in revolt against God and God's reign. In some way he has been given a great deal of authority over this fallen world, a world that is also in revolt against God... (Eph. 2.2)

Is this hard for modern people to believe?... Well, C.S. Lewis wrote these famous words "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight."

So, we'll leave it at that...but Jesus Christ comes to plunder the devil...as if...to take back what we have given him... St. John will later write, "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3.8)

And here...Jesus Christ goes out to meet the devil in a kind of cosmic battle...and there are other characters involved. The Holy Spirit is mentioned. Jesus was just baptized and as water was poured down on His sacred head, so also the Holy Spirit was poured out on Him

and appears in the image of a dove...and now the Spirit fills Him and leads Him into the wild...and into this battle with the devil.

And it was at the baptism that we also heard the voice of the Father...the heavens were torn like a curtain between the physical and spiritual realms and the Voice of God the Father spoke, "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased".

Ann then...in the wilderness...driven by the Spirit (that's the word Mark used)... and after fasting 40 days...and in this weak moment, when He is famished... the beloved Son meets the devil and hears, "if...if...if..."

"IF YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD..." Well, God, at the baptism JUST pronounced that He was indeed the Beloved Son!... "But has God really said..." (Those sound like familiar words!) "If you are the Son of God ... then what kind of son are you? Are you the kind of son who regards equality with the Father a thing to be grasped...it's YOURS but will you TAKE it?"

Go ahead and TAKE what's yours...you're hungry...so tell this stone to become bread..."

But Jesus answers with the words of Scripture, full of the Holy Spirit and full of Scripture: "It is written, 'man shall not live on bread alone...' There's more to life than just the body.

Then the devil shows Him some sort of vision of all the kingdoms of the world... "Look...humanity was given dominion but THEY gave dominion to ME...and I will give it all back to you...just bow to me/worship and it's all yours... That's why you came...right? That's the end...so what difference does the means make... bow/worship and your task is complete!... That is ... IF...you ARE the Son of God"

Once again, Jesus Christ answers with Scripture, "You shall worship ONLY the Lord your God and serve Him alone."

Then the devil says, "Well two can play that game... if you wanna quote Scripture...throw yourself off the highpoint of the Temple...because *SCRIPTURE* says, 'God will give His angels charge over you...YOU WON'T EVEN HIT THE GROUND...that's what God says...in *SCRIPTURE* You should trust HIM...YOU CAME TO REVEAL YOURSELF TO THE HOLY CITY, DIDN'T YOU?...that is IF you're really the Son of God."

And Jesus Christ says, "To misinterpret Scripture is to oppose it... THIS IS NOT TRUSTING GOD...this is testing GOD! And Scripture says, 'You shall NOT put the Lord your God to the test..."

And... three defeats...and who knows how many more temptations there were during the 40 days, v.13 "When the devil had finished EVERY temptation he departed from Him (then these ominous words) until an opportune time."

He will be back...will bruise the heel...will find a weak spot...will advertise ways of getting the end without the means (Mark 8.33) ...shortcuts...will continue to ask *as in the garden*, "Has God said...?" If...if ...if...

And since he prowls about like a roaring lion... restless and seeking someone to devour (1 Pet 5.8) he will find that opportune time.

Now, it stuck me that our tendency is to see Jesus Christ primarily as an example... "WWJD?" ...and He IS but, OF COURSE, so much MORE. But we may content ourselves by saying, "Do what Jesus did! If you find yourself faced with options...some of which are clearly evil...then quote Scripture! That's what Jesus would do!" And really, what Christian could object to that?!

But we'd be badly mistaken and would really miss the best part of this episode if we failed to see something beyond an example here. The scene is rich in imagery and significance.

Mark says the Holy Spirit "impelled" Him OUT into the wilderness. He is driven out of the Garden and into the wilds...because He is the New and Better Adam (Rom 5.19; 1 Cor 15.45). He hears the words, "Did God say..." like the first Adam heard...but this Last and Perfect Adam said, "Yes! God DID say! It is written!" He is, like the first Adam, representing His race...but rather than succumbing to the devil...He resists...He will not eat the forbidden fruit or turn the stone to bread!

And not only the Second Adam...remember...that He was taken to Egypt as a baby (to escape Herod)... and after Herod the murderer dies and Joseph is told to bring the holy child back, it says, "That Scripture might be fulfilled which said 'I will call My Son out of Egypt...'" (Matt 2.15) Why is that quoted? Because Jesus embodies the New Israel! He is all that Israel should have been but failed to be. He's the leader of the New and Better Exodus....the delightful Son in whom the Father is pleased.

And here, He goes into the wilderness for 40 days, as the old Israel did for 40 years...He's Israel concentrate and He goes to PASS THE TEST (that the old Israel failed!) and He goes to BE NOT SIMPLY OUR EXAMPLE but our Champion! All His "it is written" answers come from Deuteronomy, when the old Israel had finished their 40 years wandering. He is declaring, "I am the Son who obeys in their place!"

He goes into the arena as David stood for the Israelite armies when he defeated Goliath... More than our example, He's our substitute/champion. He's come to fight for us and win us

back from the “prince of the power of the air”, the ruler of this present age. He’s fulfilling the obligations of a new race taken from every tribe, nation and tongue, a New Israel, a New Temple made up of living stones (1 Peter 2.9).

And when that opportune time came...when He had delighted to obey all the Father’s will (obeyed IN MY PLACE) and said “Not My will but Thine be done...” then, in the deeper magic “*the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1Co 2.8) ...the devil sank his fangs into Jesus Christ... but was unable to remove them...and the ruler of this world was thrown down...and the devil’s hold on this world was forever broken...his house was plundered...and the risen Jesus Christ emerged Triumphant over death and the devil and I am set free.

Now how does this help us in the day-to-day life God has called us to live? Well, I am hearing the “ifs” (and I suspect you hear them too) but Jesus Christ has answered for me... “T.J., if you’re really a good person...really significant...really a somebody...if YOU’RE REALLY NOT A LOSER...if your life is meaningful and worthwhile... if you were really something you would look this way or drive this car or live here or ...be like a beer commercial...

And I can hear Jesus answer my accuser...in my place. I am clothed with His worthiness and with His victory...I have nothing to prove – He did it. In HIM, I am the Beloved Son...member of the New Israel and filled with the Spirit.

I am like a scrawny, powerless, cowering weakling on the playground...and before me stands a horrifying bully ready to humiliate and hurt pulverize me...and I see that bully look at my face and snarl until his yellow eyes rise...and behind me stands the Towering Figure of Big Brother, my champion... and the bully is now the one cowering in fear – listen to his voice in the gospels as evil spirits meet Jesus Christ and beg to be left alone.

I don’t always see it... still it seems like the forces of this age...sin and sickness...and poverty and meanness and cancer and falsehood and heresy and hate...all that we dread...all these forces seem alive and well...but they’re all living on borrowed time... They’re like the lions in The Pilgrim’s Progress – they’re snarling and ferocious but they’re chained and we walk down the middle of the Way... *unharmmed*...They can not reach our souls *if we are IN Jesus Christ* and members of His New Race.

When we are called, in the Bible, to stand and to fight and to resist evil AND WE ARE!...We are called to obey and called to a battle against our old selves, against the general flow of a society that does not know God and against evil and the devil...and when we are called to this subversive lifestyle – we do it NOT BY SWEAT/will-power/raw self-discipline but ALWAYS by faith and in the power of the Holy Spirit. “Not by might; not by power but by My Spirit”, says the Lord. And faith is the victory that overcomes the world.

In this way, Jesus is both Example *AND* Champion to us...He is filled and is led into battle BY THE SPIRIT and we, trusting in His victory, connected to Him BY FAITH – we too, count on the filling of the divine Spirit.

We believe that Jesus Christ, though He would NOT make bread for Himself, yet would multiply bread for the hungry, for US...in fact, would BECOME bread for us! It is because of His self-sacrifice and victory that we can give ourselves away for a bigger cause.

Our officers...are agreeing to a call (*How dare you? Who do you think you are?!*)...are going to be called upon to sacrifice free time and take time away from things they love...will be asked to make costly and unselfish choices in the coming year for the cause of Christ and the welfare of the church ... and many others in the church and in our other callings too!

And as you answer those callings (grandma, accountant, teacher, Dad, wife, elder, deacon), the “iffy” voice of the deceiver will chime in (“if people really appreciated you...if this were really a good church...if God had really called you...if all this effort did any good”) ... but call upon the better voice of our Older Brother...He stands behind you, a Champion. Let Him answer for you.

Trust Him...trust this Champion of the weak...He feels for you and knows your need... He alone knows the full weight of temptation. *“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. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.”* (Heb 4.15-16)