

The Twelve | Enrolled in the School of Jesus (C)

Jesus, the Disciple

Luke 3.21-23, 38; 4.1-14

January 24, 2021

Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened,²² and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."²³ When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Eli...³⁸ the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

^{4.1} Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness² 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.

During this season, from Christmas through Easter, we turn to *the source material of the Christian Faith – the Four Gospels*. This year we're particularly concerned with how Jesus Christ poured His Life into *twelve less-than-promising young men* – some were likely only teenagers. How did Jesus Christ train these twelve disciples? Can WE expect to be shaped and to undergo a *similar spiritual formation* as WE live the Christian life?

Should the Church attempt to MAKE disciples in the modern world the way Jesus made disciples in the ancient world? Do we see ourselves as "disciples"? AND do we see ourselves as disciple-makers, living in a community, an organization, an organism that actively makes disciples?

Maybe, we're afraid to be trained, to be made a disciple, *because* it seems... cultic. We want to think for ourselves. We *definitely DON'T want* to be victimized by some authoritarian religious organization. "Training is for jobs/work but the spiritual life is of the heart and I want to be spiritually free/spontaneous!"

"AND I've never considered MAKING disciples because... who am I? I'm barely making it in the spiritual life so how can I tell other people how to live and what to believe?"

Well, someone has said that the trouble with many spiritual shepherds *is that they've never been SHEEP*. But that cannot be said of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. He WAS a disciple before He MADE disciples. These two episodes (baptism and temptation) were crucial parts of His formation – so, today we consider Jesus the Disciple.

I want to look at these scenes like an Iceberg: 1) What we see (visible above the surface) 2) What we don't see (the greater mass below the surface) 3) How exploring the whole mass of the iceberg can help us every day

As we look at these episodes, we could analyze them like we would any plot or narrative... We could begin with the characters: John the Baptist (previous verses)... All the people... Jesus...the Holy Spirit (descending in the form of a dove), the Voice from Heaven (see Psalm 29) and then the 76 names in the genealogy (vv.24-38).

In the next scene there are two primary actors – Jesus Christ and the devil. The latter is 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... not an uncreated being...not the opposite of God...not the brother of Jesus...he does not carry a pitchfork, not red, no horns...etc.

It appears that he's the leader of the fallen angels or evil spirits who are in revolt against God and God's reign. In some way he's been given a great deal of authority over this fallen world, a world that's also in revolt against God... (Eph. 2.2)

Is this hard for modern people to believe?

We can't do better than the famous words of C.S. Lewis (intro to *The Screwtape Letters*): "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 except to say that Jesus Christ came to plunder the devil (Matt 12.29)...as if...to take back what we've given to 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 (Isa 64.1) 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*".

And *then*...in the wilderness...driven by the Spirit (that's the word Mark used)... and after fasting 40 days...and in this weakest moment, *when He's 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 IS indeed thē Beloved Son!*... "But has God *really* said..." (Those words sound familiar!) "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 (Phil 2.6)...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 the dominion to ME...and I will give it all back to You... IF You just bow to me 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!"

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 really ARE the Son of God."

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

Three defeats for the evil one...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'll 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: he'll continue to ask *as in the garden*, "Has God REALLY said...?" If...if ...if...

And since he slithers like a serpent and prowls about like a roaring lion... restless and seeking someone to devour (1 Pet 5.8) he will find that opportune time (Luke 22.3).

Now, it stuck me that our tendency is to see Jesus Christ primarily as an example... "WWJD?" ...and He *IS* OF COURSE, but so much MORE. And if we are 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? Of course, "Jesus the Example" is really NOT the Good News.

And we'd be missing the most distinctively Christian part of these episodes if we failed to see something beyond an example here, something DEEPER. The scenes are rich in imagery and significance IF *we only look beneath the surface*.

Mark says the Holy Spirit "impelled" (ἐκβάλλει Mar 1.12) 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) – the True and eternally begotten "Son of God". He hears the words, "Did God really say...?" like the first Adam heard...*but this Last and Perfect Adam answers*, "Yes! God DID say! IT IS WRITTEN!" He's like the first Adam, also representing His race...but He resists the devil...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; Hosea 11.1)

Why is that quoted? Because the Messiah embodies the New Israel! *He's 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, the New Joshua who crosses the Jordan before His campaign to take the Holy Land with the sword that comes from His mouth! (Rev. 1.16)

And here, He goes into the wilderness for 40 days, as the old Israel did for 40 years... He's the condensed Israel coming to PASS THE TEST (that the old Israel failed!). He goes to battle NOT SIMPLY AS OUR EXAMPLE but as our Champion! *All of His "it is written" answers come from Deuteronomy*, when the old Israel had finished their 40 years wandering. He's 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 (John 12.31). 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), a new Adam representing a new humanity.

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... and was then 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 is raided ...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 answering my accuser...in my place. I'm clothed with His worthiness and with His victory... *Stepping INTO those waters, He was stepping into my MESS, baptized with my obligations and now I have nothing to prove* – He did it. In HIM, I am become the Beloved Son... a member of the New Israel and filled with the Spirit.

I'm like a scrawny, powerless, cowering weakling on the playground...and before me stands a truly evil bully ready to humiliate and hammer me...and I see that bully look at me and snarl until his yellow eyes rise...and behind me stands the Towering Figure of my Big Brother, my Champion... and the bully is now the one cowering in fear. Listen to his panic in the gospels as evil spirits meet Jesus Christ and beg to be left alone.

I don't always see it... often it seems like the forces of this age...sin and sickness...and poverty and cruelty 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're called, in the Bible, to stand and to fight and to resist evil AND WE ARE...we're 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're called to this alternative lifestyle – we do it NOT BY SWEAT/will-power/raw self-discipline "*Not by might; not by power but by My Spirit* says the Lord." (Zec. 4.6). And faith is the victory that overcomes the world (1 John 5.4).

In this way, Jesus is BOTH Example AND Champion to us (we see the whole iceberg!)...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! Because of His self-sacrifice and victory we can give ourselves away for a bigger cause.

The devil quoted Psalm 91 – but he dared not read the next verse: "You will tread upon the lion and cobra, the young lion and the serpent you will trample down." (v.13)

The Holy Spirit led Christ from the Garden into the Wilderness so that He might lead me out of the Wilderness and back to the Garden.

The Christian is NOT living an easy life... but the same Spirit who led Jesus Christ...the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead goes with us...lives IN us.

He convicts me of sin, He goes with me in my parenting, my conversations, my daily work, my retirement and He answers the defeated adversary... and gently convinces me that what God has said is true, I really am a beloved child of God: "God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (Gal 4.6)