



Loyal to God Alone

Luke 4:5-6

July 24, 2016

We should never doubt God's care and concern. He takes care of the most insignificant of the creatures. How much more will he care for us? But the devil tempted Jesus, nonetheless, to turn from faith in God and to turn to himself to provide for himself. Jesus answered there, confirming God's intent to provide for all of our needs. He said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" The clear implication from the rest of what it says there in Deuteronomy, is that God will provide for all of your needs. He'll even rain bread from heaven. Bread is not the issue; the issue is, do you trust in God?

So that first temptation was about daily provision. This second temptation, Luke 4:5-8 it's about future reward. The devil tempted Jesus with reward, with treasure, we might put it. And he let Jesus in on a way to get that reward now. He didn't have to wait to get it later. He could get it right now, all that God had for him. Once again, Jesus stood firm. He turned

away. How he did that, how he discerned the devil's scheme, and how he saw through that temptation. That's going to be the subject of our study for this morning.

As we embark on our study, I want you to ask yourself a question as you think through the text here. What do I most treasure? What's most important to me? And then ask yourself a follow up question. Am I living in such a way so as to get that treasure, to attain that reward? Am I living my life in such a way that what I say I want and what I pursue are really dovetailing into the same thing?

Well, with that in mind, look at the text starting in Luke Chapter 4, verse 5, "And the devil took Jesus up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"

Just a quick note, almost a footnote here about the order of the second and third temptations here in Luke's Gospel. The

order is actually different than in Matthew's account. Both Matthew and Luke enter into this time of testing and temptation with noting Jesus' hunger, his hunger after fasting for forty days and this temptation to turn the stones into bread. But Matthew, in Matthew's account, the devil takes Jesus to the temple first and then up to the high mountain.

As we see, Luke has these two settings switched. That's not a contradiction at all. It's just a difference in treatment. It's just the difference of each author's approach, which depends on authorial intent. Matthew's account appears to take more of a chronological approach to the temptations, and he uses in his account temporal markers, in words of sequence, like the word, then, is repeated several times. "Then Jesus was led up into the wilderness," "Then the devil took him into the holy city," and, "Again the devil took him to a high mountain," and then finally at the very end, "Then the devil left him."

So Matthew's account seems to be more chronological. Luke, though, he seems less concerned about chronology and more interested in the setting. He tracks the geographical movement. He goes from the wilderness to the mountain heights and culminates at the temple. The temple in Jerusalem, it's one of

the major settings in Luke's Gospel, which has to do with the theme that runs through Luke's Gospel of true worship. What is true worship consist of?

That is interesting to note because our passage ends with true worship as the pivot point. "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve." That command that Jesus recites there, it turns us as we read the text from the nations of the world, the nations of the earth, to the focal point of true worship, which is located at the temple in Jerusalem.

That was the bait that was on the hook in the second temptation, after all. All the authority of the kingdoms of the world and their glory. None of us is ever going to be tempted with something that grand and if we were, would we see through the temptation there? Would we look past the bait and notice the deadly hook that's hidden beneath it? You say, well, this is an easy one. I mean it's a crass appeal to satanic worship. How much clearer could this be to turn away from? How could that tempt anyone?

Be careful that you don't too quickly assume that you have the nature of this temptation all figured out because you don't.

I thought I did. I thought I did. I was surprised. And if you too quickly think you've got this all solved, you're going to fail to see what's truly at stake here and how easy it is to fall to this kind of temptation in your own life.

As we get a better grasp here of what's happening, we're going to get a better appreciation really, for Jesus' perfections. We're going to see on display his wisdom to discern and see through to the true nature of this temptation. We're going to see his holy resolve to deftly sidestep the trap and stand firm. That's what I want you to notice most of all is the perfect wisdom and holiness of Christ here. They're on full display.

And once again we find in him absolute confidence to trust him as our Savior, to obey him as our Lord, because we may fall to this temptation. We don't want to. That's what we're going to try to learn some discernment this morning about. But he never did and in anything we've failed, he has succeeded. We have in him a firm foundation for our faith. We can learn from Jesus to be loyal to God and to God alone.

So getting right into our outline here, three points this morning. This is the first, simply, the bait. What is the bait? Look at verses 5 to 7, the devil throws a line in the water, and he's dangling before Jesus an attractive bit of bait, a little morsel. "The devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, 'To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I can give it to whoever I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.'"

As I said, the first temptation was about one thing, food, satisfying hunger. It was a simple need and a simple temptation. This temptation, though, is a bit more complex. This temptation gets into the, it, it whittles into the mind. It gets into the appeal, to the desires of the mind, to internal ambition. And as I said, it may seem at first glance easy to figure out, but it's far more subtle than it appears. The devil here, he offers Jesus the world and despite how it appears at first glance, the price tag he even offers is, seems to be quite low.

But let's start here with its attractiveness. What made this attractive and an apt temptation for Jesus himself? There are four attractive elements in this temptation. Four aspects of

this temptation that really kind of sweeten the deal and make this a very appealing temptation. First of all, it was pleasing to the eye. Second of all, it was pleasing to the mind. Third thing, it was easy, at least it seemed so. Fourthly, it was offered as being something inconsequential , not great consequence. I'll repeat all of those as we go through them. It was pleasing to the eye, pleasing to the mind, it was easy, and it was inconsequential.

First is the appeal to what Jesus could see, pleasing to the eye. What the devil showed him here was extremely attractive. In verse 5 it says, "The devil took him up." If we compare that with what's recorded in Matthew 4:8, we know that up refers to the top of a very high mountain. A number of questions come up at this point about the scene. Well, how did they get there? They were down in the floor of the wilderness. How did they get up there? Which mountain, by the way, offered such a view that they could see all of this? Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

I read a lot about explanations of all those questions and more questions. The Bible doesn't answer them. In fact, the writers, both Matthew and Luke, seem relatively uninterested in

those kinds of details. Luke simply tells us here that the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

So let's not get caught up in that, let's focus on what the writer wants us to focus on, that Jesus got a top-of-the-world view. The focus here, keep in mind, it's not on the entire globe. We don't need to imagine Jesus looking down from his vantage point there in the, probably in the Holy Land somewhere there in Palestine. We don't need to imagine him looking down on the continents of the western hemisphere, where we are now. The word here that Luke uses, tells us he looked down not on the entire globe, but on an economic system.

When it says "kingdoms of the world," the word translated world is *oikoumene* and that's a word that refers to household management. We get the word, economy from the word *oikoumene*, economy. So the devil is showing Jesus the kingdoms of the *oikoumene*, the kingdoms involved in the economic system. Same word that's used back in Luke Chapter 2, verse 1 when Caesar Augustus required the whole world, the *oikoumene* to be registered.

He wasn't reaching out to Papua New Guinea to have them registered. I mean, if he knew about Papua New Guinea, he probably would have tried to. He's a politician, he wants tax money, but he didn't exactly have them connected into the system yet, right? So we're talking about his realm, his authority. We're talking about the kingdoms under the authority here of the Roman Empire. And the devil showed Jesus the web of the world's economy. It started there in Rome and it spread westward through Europe. It spread southward through Judea and Egypt, eastward to Syria and Persia, and he saw all of it in motion. It says , as the text say there, he saw it all going on "in a moment of time." Quite an impressive sight, right?

It was a vantage point that perhaps Abraham had seen centuries before. Back in Genesis 13 we read about the time when Abraham and Lot separated from one another. Lot chose the well-watered lowlands, the Jordan valley, and it contained the infamous cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. But after that, after Lot separated and went his way, we read that God came to Abraham and said, "Lift your eyes," that's good, that's good counsel for all of us, isn't it?

Lift your eyes. "Lift your eyes up, look from the place you are, northward, southward, eastward, and westward, for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you." That promise of God, it was fulfilled, but not completely. God did give Israel the land, but the children of Israel, as you know, never fully possessed it. They disobeyed, that brought the judgment of God. They were eventually expelled from the land. And what Israel failed to do, Jesus came to accomplish. He came to fulfill for them. The promise of God remained for the children of Abraham, but the physical possession of that land awaited the reign of the Messiah on earth.

And that's the promise we read of when we read in Psalm 2:7 and 8, when the father told the son, his Messiah, Psalm 2, "You are my son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession." So the Messiah will one day rule the nations from the throne of David located in Jerusalem.

There's another Messianic Psalm, Psalm 22, and in verse 27-28 it says, "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn

to the Lord, all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For kingship belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations." That promise is dramatically portrayed over in Isaiah 60. In fact, if you would, just turn in your Bibles back to Isaiah 60. Just quickly because I want you to read this for yourself, to see for yourself this amazing prophecy that, that promises Israel during the earthly reign of the Messiah, the fulfillment of Abrahamic blessing, and particularly with regard to the rest of the nations coming to Israel. Jesus is the one who fulfills all of this.

Look at Isaiah chapter 60, verse 1, "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes all around, and see," sounds like the call to Abraham, right?

"Lift up your eyes all around, and see. They all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar and your daughters shall be carried on the hip. And then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult, because

of the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praise of the Lord." Notice the praises of the Lord are coming from the nations back to Jerusalem. "All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you; the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you; they shall come up with acceptance on my altar, and I will beautify my beautiful house.

Skip down to verse 10, "Foreigners shall build up your walls, their kings shall minister to you; for in my wrath I struck you, but in my favor, I have had mercy on you. Your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut, that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession." Skip over to verse 14, "The sons of those who afflicted you shall come bending low to you, and all who despised you shall bow down at your feet; they shall call you the City of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

"Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, with no one passing through, I will make you majestic forever, a joy from age to age. You shall suck the milk of nations; you shall nurse at the breast of kings; and you shall know that I, the Lord, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. Instead of bronze I will bring gold, and instead of iron I will bring silver; instead of wood, bronze; instead of stones, iron. I will make your overseers, peace and your taskmasters, righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise."

And on and on it goes. As God said, "I will make the nations your heritage, the ends of the earth your possession." He's speaking to Jesus there, to the Messiah. And now, the devil gives him a sneak peek. He gives him a preview. Turn back to Luke 4. The devil takes Jesus up onto a high mountain and he gives him this panoramic view of his inheritance, as if to say, There's your reward. What's stopping us from getting this started right now?

It's interesting to imagine what Jesus saw from that vantage point, from the top of a very high mountain. He could

see all the terrain features, a fascinating topography of the land, vast, magnificent, beautiful. This vantage point offered Jesus a view of land and sea, all the routes of commerce that connected the kingdoms of the economic system of the world. He could see the Roman roads, probably see the caravans that were traveling on them. He could see the Mediterranean Sea, the ships arriving and departing from coastal harbors. All the industry and the productivity that all of that represented. The dynamism of economic growth, the order and safety and security provided by the Roman system, the Pax Romana.

From that vantage point, that lofty perspective, it would be very easy to see the world at its idyllic best, right? And that's exactly the way the devil wanted Jesus to see the world. It's easy to forget when you're admiring beauty from a high peak, that all that beautiful topography was created by God's judgment on sin, by a Noahic flood that drowned the entire earth, save eight people and two of every kind of animal.

If you think about it, it is interesting to consider what Jesus could not see from that great height, being so far removed. You know what he couldn't see in detail? He couldn't see the sinners. He couldn't see the sin that poisoned every

single relationship. He couldn't see the sin that insinuated itself into every business transaction. He couldn't see the crime and corruption. He couldn't see the backroom deals. He couldn't see how sin was destroying families, hurting people.

From that height, Jesus couldn't see all the pain and sorrow. He couldn't hear the cries for help, the widow, the orphans in distress. All he could see from way up there, perched atop a very high mountain, was the world at its best. The superficial beauty of the world, the picture of busy industry and dynamic productivity. Not too much detail, not too clear of a focus, just the most positive way to look at a fallen world, right? That's what the devil wanted him to see.

Still, it presented quite a sight. Without allowing too much time to pause and reflect, the devil interrupted that serenity with an offer. Here's the second aspect of the temptation that made it attractive. It was an appeal here to Jesus' sense of ambition, a desire of the mind. Notice verse 6, the devil said to him, "to you." That's right in front there, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory."

It's interesting that in forming the sentence, the devil appealed to self-interest. Those words, to you, they're up front for emphasis. It's all about you. It's all about you, Jesus. That's at the heart of every solicitation to sin, isn't it? Self at the center. And notice how he attempts to tempt Jesus this way. He brought him up on a really high mountain. He shows him a spectacular mountaintop view of the world, and then he leads out with this irresistible offer, "all this authority and all the glory." By showing Jesus this big-picture perspective, he puts the focus where he wants it to be and that is on the glory and the honor, not on the responsibility, not on the duty, not on the work.

As we said, from a high mountain peak, the earth looks pretty good, doesn't it? I don't know about you, but I love to travel into the mountains and get up on the Trail Ridge Road and see all of that beauty, all of that glory from up high. I love it. But that's exactly how the devil wants to keep it. He wants to keep Jesus' eyes focused on that. That's the only perspective he wants him to have.

Authority over the earth here, absent of any concern about responsibility. He shows Jesus this amazing, magnificent view in

verse 5, "All the kingdoms of the world." He presents this unparalleled offer verse 6, "All authority and glory," and he repeatedly puts Jesus at the center of all of it. Notice verse 6, "To you," verse 7, "It will all be yours." Incredible view, unparalleled authority, personal glory, not a word about responsibility.

Again, as we read from Psalm 104 earlier, God takes responsibility in his sovereignty for the entire creation. Not just the economic system, not just the important people in the world, not just the rulers and all their interests. He waters the valleys and the hills. He provides drink for the beasts and the birds. He causes the grass to grow thick for food, the trees to grow as homes for the birds. He gives the mountains as a home to the wild goats. To the rock badgers, he gives the rocks.

Psalm 104:27, "These all look to you to give them their food in due season." That's God. That's his way. "With authority" is all responsibility to care. When God gives authority, it assumes the responsibility to serve, to care for, to govern with kindness. He's a good and wise sovereign and that's what he promised to his son.

But the devil's offer, it's a bit different in focus. It is free of personal sacrifice. No obligation to anyone but self at the center. The whole offer is couched in terms of self-interest and self-glorification. And added to what Jesus saw and heard here was this tacit assurance that this would be easy, easy. I like easy. Don't you like easy? Much better than hard. It seems to be, right? That's what he's offering.

So the third attractive element of the bait here, the devil appealed to a sense of ease, a preference for a lack of difficulty. Take a look at verse 6 again, "To you I'll give all this authority and their glory, for," here's the cause, here's the reason, "it has been delivered to me and I give it to whom I will." See? Easy! I got it all figured out. You don't have to worry yourself, trouble your little mind about a thing.

He presents this offer to Jesus as a matter of will and desire. This is really simple. I just happened to have all this authority and glory to give you, and it's in my power to do so. In fact, you know what? I want to give it to you. I'm just, I'm eager. I'm eager to give this to you. He seems so friendly. I mean the devil is such a relational guy. He loves relationship evangelism. He's leading out with the friendship. He's leading

out with the gifts. Significant gifts at that, right? He's magnanimous, he's generous. You might even be tempted to say, what a gracious gesture. What a nice guy.

What is this without the, just an offer of authority and of glory without any sense of suffering. No sense of difficulty, pain, travail, sorrow. None of that's there. The devil offers Jesus here a shortcut to personal glory. Bypass the suffering. Don't worry about paying any dues. Don't worry about putting in the hard yards, I got you covered. No one needs to know. It will be our little secret.

God's ways, not so simple. God is clear about his promise of suffering, not only to Jesus, but to all of us who follow Jesus Christ, right? He didn't promise ease to Jesus. He, instead, promised exactly the opposite. He promised him intense suffering when the father foretold through Isaiah the prophet. In Isaiah 53:11-12, "Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; and he shall bear their iniquities."

There's a whole lot of anguish described in Isaiah 53. A whole lot of pain, a whole lot of suffering. And it's not just the suffering at the hands of the Jews. It's not just the nails

that were pounded by Roman hands. It's the suffering of the father, who put his son to death. It's the wrath of an omnipotent God, "out of the anguish of his soul." His soul felt the anguish. "Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied." "He shall bear their iniquities." Verse 12, "Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because," here's the reason, "he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors." Oh, he paid his dues. Oh, he went through the suffering. Will you? Will I?

The devil offered Jesus the portion without the persecution. He offered Jesus the spoil of the strong without this whole messy business of pouring out his soul to death. All that unpleasantness, all that bad company, being numbered with transgressors. Who wants them? He was appealing here to Jesus' natural sense of self-preservation. A human instinct to avoid pain and suffering. Jesus, he said, Jesus, to you I am going to give all of this. It's mine to give and I want to give it to you.

The fourth aspect of this temptation that makes it attractive, and that's the tradeoff. Nothing of great

consequence seems to be at stake here. All the devil asks for here is a little respect, just a little acknowledgment. Look at verses 6 and 7 again, the devil said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it's been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

The verb there for worship is *proskyneo*. It's translated worship in our modern translations, but it doesn't just refer to a heart attitude of worship, that is, an internal heart attitude of worship. It can refer to something much more external as well. It can refer to the bodily position even of a worshipper, prostrate, *proskyneo*. Matthew is more explicit on this point than Luke is. He records the devil as saying, "All these I will give to you if you fall down and worship me." He's talking about the bodily position.

And the aorist tense of this verb indicates he's only asking for it one time, just, just a single bow. The devil, the devil just is asking Jesus to genuflect, to prostrate himself, to bow before him. And keep in mind, this may seem like a radical thing for you and I here in America, twenty-first century. Back then, not such a big deal.

And in ancient Near East context, bowing was quite a common thing to do, pretty routine. You could see it all over the place. People bowed before others all of the time as a sign of deference and respect to those in authority. Personal character wasn't the issue, it was a matter of rank. People bowed before people of rank. It's the whole salute-the-rank-not-the-person idea. It's what the devil's looking for here. He's just asking Jesus to show just a little honor and respect for his position and title as the reigning sovereign of the earth.

In fact, that's a connection you see from verse 6 to verse 7. As the devil uses the word, therefore, it's translated, then, in your ESV Bible, but it's the word, therefore, in the Greek. The King James Version, the NAS translate it that way. The devil says, "All this authority and their glory, it's has been delivered to me. If you, therefore, will worship me, it will all be yours." He's making a connection between what's been delivered to him and the appropriate gesture of deference to bow.

In other words, the devil is saying, since the authority and the glory have been delivered to me, the right and proper

thing to do is to acknowledge my place, to render the proper salute, the culturally appropriate show of respect, just bow before me. Just one simple act of obeisance. All the devil is asking for here is a proper, really a proper turnover, you know?

You can see this in the military when one commanding officer comes in to take over from another commanding officer. It's just a change of position there. Just to hand over the command. So, just transfer the authority appropriately with me, Jesus. Hand over the position. You are the one who comes to take the reins of power from me, is what he's saying. As the incoming Messiah coming to take over the earth, after all. Coming to rule, after all, the incoming ruler simply needs to demonstrate his rightful homage to the outgoing ruler of the earth.

And notice that the devil is so accommodating about it, isn't he? This act of bowing doesn't even require some kind of public veneration. No public ceremony at all. Just the two of them. He can do this in private, where no one's looking. Just between the two of them. Just bow. Verse 7, "It will all be yours." That's pretty juicy bait, isn't it? Pretty juicy to become the ranking authority over the earth, to possess the glory of the world's economy, industry, wealth, prosperity,

bypassing the pain and suffering and all of that for the seemingly small price of just a private bow, which is, after all, culturally appropriate act of Near Eastern respect. No big deal, no big consequence.

Before we move on, having looked at these four attractive elements. Let's just take quick stock here of the way the devil tempts because he visits us in the very same way today. Same devil, same tricks, but practiced repeatedly over the course of human history since the fall, for thousands of years. Paul tells us, 2 Corinthians 2:11 that we're not to be outwitted by Satan. "For we are not ignorant of his designs." Why aren't we ignorant? Because it is written and we can read about it. "We must," Ephesians 6:11, "Put on the whole armor of God that we may be able to stand against," I love the word there, "the schemes of the devil." He's got strategies and tactics, scheming.

So what designs can we identify here? How do we identify the nature and the manner of his schemes? We just saw him try to tempt Jesus by appealing to a sense of sight, right? We can expand that sense of sight to all the senses, all the physical senses and just summarize it this way to say that the devil, he

wants us to think sensually, not spiritually. He wants us to remain enslaved to our feelings, to do what feels good, to pursue what looks good. Don't think too long and too carefully because that's hard work. Just receive the physical stimuli and respond. Or as one slogan put it, just do it. Just do it.

When the devil visits us with a solicitation to think about what's best for the self, he finds us all too willing to comply. And that's the second thing we see here. We see the devil attempt to entice Jesus by appealing to self-interest. He wants us to keep the self at the center of our thinking. It's all about our preferences. It's all about the kind of music I like. It's all about my food choices, my comfort, my desire, my sense of honor, what we think we deserve. That's probably the defining aspect of our sin nature, isn't it, this self-centeredness?

I don't know about you, but sometimes this temptation can visit us after we have served others. Do you ever notice that? You serve others, you give, you sacrifice, sometimes with great effort, great cost and then we let our guard down because it's time for a little me-time, right? It's time to watch the football game. The devil whispers to us and tells us, hey, it's time to consider yourself. You've been thinking about a lot of

people, you're going to wear yourself out. If you enter into that trap, that temptation, mark my words, you'll fall. You will fall. And then any resistance that we might muster in the hour of temptation, the devil will attempt to overcome in the next two tactics that he employed against Jesus.

He appeals to our preference for ease. He assures us of privacy, telling us there is really no consequence for our decision. He offers the fast track to pleasure, to glory, to honor. No concern about the repercussions. Don't think about tomorrow, live in the now. You deserve this, you need this. What may at first glance seem like a minor compromise, it's actually the prelude to sin and death. The consequences are always devastating no matter how innocent it may seem in the moment.

That's where we look back at what the devil said to Jesus. And we can see that hidden beneath the bait there is always a hook with very sharp barbs that sink deep in. Let's look back at those verses again and get a closer look here of what the devil offered. We'll look beneath the juicy bait. I like how the Proverbs puts it when it warns people against drinking wine. It says, "don't look at wine when it's red and it's sparkly in the

cup.” That’s not the time to look and consider the decision. You want to look at the consequences.

So that’s what we’re going to look at here. We want to expose the hook and all its barbs. Why couldn’t Jesus simply do the courteous thing here? Why couldn’t he just show a little deference to the devil, just a little? He is the ruling potentate of the earth, after all. He said it. Because the consequences of that action would be irreversible. The consequences would be the undoing of divine redemption. That’s the deadly hook.

That’s our second point, the hook. It’s a three-pronged hook, a hook with three barbs on it. If Jesus had taken a bite, even a nibble, it would not only wound Jesus mortally but it would take the devil’s bargain. It would be the final unravelling of the plan of divine redemption. Look at verses 6 and 7 again, “The devil said to him, ‘To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.”

First barb on the hook is the barb of atheism. Atheism. I'm not talking here about a formal philosophical atheism. Rather, this is a practical atheism. This here is an invitation to make decisions apart from the consideration of God. That this is God's world, God's universe. I stand in it and so do you. Everybody in this world, in the secular world, is trying to get us to think that way. They want to keep God out of this, God out of that. They want you to have a conversation with them, real transparent, tolerant conversation, but let's not talk about God. You gotta keep that out.

Commentator James Edwards made a very important observation here, he notes, quote, "The devil makes five references to himself and three to Jesus, but none to God." End quote. Isn't that interesting? Five references to self, three to Jesus and none to God. He speaks here as if God does not exist, that's intentional. Notice in his explanation for the authority that he possesses to hand over the earth, the authority of the earth and the glory to Jesus, he used the passive voice there. He says, "It has been delivered to me."

Whenever you want to hide the subject of the verb, you put the verb in the passive voice. You don't say, God delivered this

me, you say, it has been delivered to me. Hey, how did, who broke the vase? Oh, it fell. You ever hear that from your kids? They want to hide the subject of the verb, me, I knocked it off, Dad. Sorry. Devil's doing the same thing. He's like a little third-grader, knocked the vase off, right? How has it been delivered to him? Who permitted that? He is trying to hide here, the sovereignty of God.

And he's trying to replace the sovereignty of God with his own autonomy, his personal autonomy, his own right to decide. I will give; I give to whom I will. There's no sovereign God present there. No righteous law-giver, no impartial judge. Satan wants to keep this matter just between Jesus and himself, to carve out a little place in the universe where God is not. It's a complete fantasy, and yet he is successful in that enticement again and again and again with us, isn't he? But not with Jesus.

The second barb in the hook, it's the barb of deception. Deception. And it's deception on two accounts. First, he attempts to deceive Jesus about the nature of his own authority and autonomy and second, he attempts to deceive about the viability of his plan. Satan's a liar. You can't believe

anything he says. As Jesus said in John 8:44, "When he lies, he speaks out of his own character," his own nature, "for he is a liar and the father of lies." Every time he opens his mouth, a lie is going to come out. So knowing that, we're on the lookout.

So let's consider first his claims about himself. Was the authority and the glory of the earth really the devils to give? And then backing up from there, in what sense had the authority of the earth been delivered over to Satan in the first place? Does he really possess legitimate authority? Authority that Jesus is obliged to acknowledge? And can he transfer that? You know the answer to those questions. But let's consider carefully how the devil's trying to do this. How he's trying to deceive Jesus here.

The Bible does tell us that Satan is a significantly influential being, no doubt about that. A ruler with great power. In 1 John 5:19 it says, "The whole world lies in the power of the evil one." Paul calls him in 2 Corinthians 4:4, "the god of this world." In Ephesians 2:2, he tells us, "The devil exerts significant influence as the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience." Oh, yes, he has power.

He also has a position of authority, which is acknowledged by the titles that are used of him. Jesus refers to the devil three times in John's Gospel as, "The ruler of this world," John 12:31, John 14:30, John 16:11. "The ruler of this world." Paul calls him, "The prince of the power of the air." So he does possess real power, and he does possess actual authority. He exercises influence from a position of authority in the world. He is a ruler.

Paul warns us on that basis, Ephesians 6:12. "We don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." Rulers, authorities, cosmic powers, all those are titles for demonic rank. And perched at the top of that ranking structure, sitting in authority as the chief executive, is Satan himself. So he has real authority. He has position and power.

At the same time, though, we need to understand the parameters, the sphere, the limits of his authority. When Paul called the devil a prince, he was speaking about his influence over unbelievers, not over believers. In Ephesians 2:1-2, it says, "You were," past tense, "were dead in trespasses and sins

in which you once walked," past tense, "following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work," in whom? "The sons of disobedience," right?

But God loved us. He set his love on us. He made us alive in Christ. He raised us up with Christ. He raised us up and then seated us with Christ in the heavenly places. We're no longer under the jurisdiction of the devil. Amen! Paul again sets the boundaries of Satan's authority over the unbelieving dead. In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 he says this, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case, the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

This is why the, the Jews, they had a nickname for Satan. They referred to him Beelzebul. Sometimes you see it translated Beelzebub. It's a term that may have originated from a Philistine deity, Baal, which is lord and *zebul*, or of the flies. Flies gather on dead things, rotting things, right? The devil is the leader of the flies that gather on dead things.

That's the extent of his authority. That's the sphere of his influence, over rot and decay.

So, yeah, okay, he possesses power and authority, but it is limited to the dead and dying, not to the living. And he certainly has no authority over Jesus. He certainly has no authority over God. In fact, whenever Jesus referred to the devil as the ruler of this world, it was never in a flattering way, never in a deferential way. He spoke of the devil as the ruler of this world, always to teach about the devil's limitations. "Now the ruler of this world will be cast out." *Ekballo*, exorcised, cast out, thrown away, John 12:31. "The ruler of this world has no claim on me," John 14:30. "And the ruler of this world," John 16:11, "is judged." Judged.

Satan is trying to deceive him to make himself and his authority appear greater than it is. It's called being puffed up. You know the type. He's limited for sure, but the devil here, he tries to assert his sovereignty, a sovereignty that he doesn't possess. When he told Jesus, verse 6, "To you I'll give all this authority and their glory, I give it to whom I will." He was lying. No surprise there. Not only that, but he's being deceptive about how he received his authority in the first

place. He seems to imply that he possesses his authority legitimately, which is why he wants Jesus to bow legitimately. If he did that, Jesus would have wrongly legitimized the devil's authority.

Look, just because the unbelieving world is in Satan's power, it does not mean that he has the authority to delegate it. He cannot distribute or bestow honor and authority. God has not given the devil authority to grant anything. The devil wields the power of fear and death. The devil possesses the ability to lie and to deceive, to commit murder. He has no authority to share or distribute authority, and honor, and glory. That's God's sovereign right and God's right alone.

Let's not forget how the devil came to possess this authority in the first place. He didn't win it legitimately, through a heroic action, stellar service in the cause of God. No, Satan won his place, if we want to call it that, through deception and murder. He, he's the greatest mass murderer who ever lived. The greatest insurrectionist who ever lived because he led Adam and Eve into transgression and thereby, he murdered the entire human race. Do you know what he's guilty of?

Genocide. He's a genocidal maniac. Don't listen to anything he says.

Furthermore, when God remanded unbelieving humanity to the devil's power and authority, it's not like it was given to the devil as a reward. The devil represented it that way, though, in verse 6, "It's been delivered to me, I give it to whom I will." The word, delivered, there, is *paradidomi*, which has the sense of putting someone into the power of another. It's the sense of handing them over, delivering them over.

It's the idea of a prisoner being delivered over to a jailer, that's not any reward to the jailer. He's just there to do his job and make sure the prisoner doesn't get out. Humanity is in the power of Satan. It's not a reward to Satan; it's a punishment for humanity. When God told Adam, Genesis 2:17, "In the day that you eat of it you will surely die." You know what? He wasn't kidding. God delivered all of those who refused to believe to "the one who," according to Hebrews 2:14, "to the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil."

So the devil is a deceiver. It wasn't just a deception about the nature of his position and his autonomy. It wasn't

just a deception about his ability to give and transfer authority. It was also, he also attempted to deceive Jesus about the viability of his plan, like this would work. I'll just mention this quickly. What would have happened if Jesus took the devil's bargain? What would have happened if Jesus paid his respects to the devil, performed this culturally appropriate genuflection, the bow?

Look, had that happened, let's just say, we wouldn't be here talking about this. We wouldn't even be here. There would be nothing to reflect upon because reality itself would just cease to exist. If the one whom God had sent, the one that God chose and prophesied about before the foundation of the world, by the way, if he failed on the mission for which God had sent him, then God would have failed. The unchanging God who does not lie would have not told the truth. That's the undoing of God. And in the undoing of God, is the undoing of all reality because there is no other sufficient, all-sufficient cause for all reality.

So in that sense, it's just a moot bit of speculation here to consider what might have happened had Jesus succumbed to this temptation, but we're going to do it anyway, okay? Let's imagine

for a moment that the universe didn't immediately unravel, what would this look like for Jesus to participate in the devil's bargain?

First of all, Jesus would be in league with Satan, but not as an equal, certainly not as a superior. He'd be subordinate to Satan as the one who granted him the authority of all the earth. Secondly, Jesus would simply continue exercising dominion over the earth in the same way that authority had always been exercised after the fall, by the fear of death, by might makes right, by subjugation through force. Jesus would have become just another puppet king in an empire of death.

That brings us to a third barb on this three-pronged hook. We've seen the barb of atheism, the barb of deception. Thirdly, the third barb is the barb of unbelief. We could guess is that the barb of unbelief, to distrust God, to turn away from God, to distrust his perfect plan. Look, there is no other solution to the human problem, to Israel's problem, to the problem of the nations, except the one that God planned and decreed from before the foundation of the world.

God's plan of redemption, to change the heart through regeneration, to make the heart, the soul a willing subject of divine wisdom, to convert the sinning rebel into a worshipping subject of the heavenly kingdom. That plan of redemption would have never come to pass if Jesus had followed this. Is there a better plan than what God has decided? Look, the only way to rule a race of people, all of whom are committed to personal autonomy, committed to self-rule, committed to self-centeredness. Look around you, read the headlines, look at the news stories on the Internet. The only way to rule them is through power and domination, it's through fear of death.

And Jesus, if he would have bowed to this temptation, he would have simply joined the ranks of the demonic horde. Nothing would change. Fallen humanity would continue in its enslavement to sin, to Satan, to death. So God intended to upend that whole system, to do away with it. Messianic rule was to begin by addressing the real problem with humanity, the fundamental problem of sin.

Listen, every social problem we face, every social, civil unrest, every social evil. Whether it's divorce, sexual immorality, criminality, self-centered ambition, greed, lust for

power, every social problem, it stems from the sin in the human heart and that's why external legislation, new legislation, changes in leadership, a new Constitution, a return to the old Constitution of America's founding fathers, none of that is going to solve humanity's problems.

That's why God sent Jesus Christ, to redeem mankind, to die on the cross for our sins. In him is the death of death itself. Jesus provided full satisfaction of God's demand for justice. For all the ways we transgressed his law. He provided the atonement we needed, so that we might have a heart to submit to God and draw near to him in worship.

Even if Satan could have delivered on this futile promise to Jesus. If, if Jesus had moved, bent slightly to make the slightest downward bow, he would have immediately disqualified himself. He would have destroyed the plan of redemption. Like Adam, he would have distrusted God, he would have transgressed. He would have disqualified himself from holding any earthly power and authority. But through sleight of hand, Satan would have held on to his earthly rule, which is what he wanted the whole time anyway. Power and authority would remain in the

devil's hands by default. Pretty tricky, eh? Dangerous business making deals with the devil.

Jesus saw through it. He looked past the bait, he saw the hook and he escaped. That's our third point here, the escape. Look at verse 8, "Jesus said to him, 'It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve."'" We've taken some time to examine the bait and the dangerous hook beneath, but I love the fact that Jesus ignores all of that. He doesn't expose the deception. He doesn't interact with Satan's arguments. He doesn't have a conversation, go point-by-point, reason with the devil.

Instead, Jesus confronts Satan with the one person he tried to ignore. He cuts through the devil's attempt to create a world in which God is not. He cuts through all the devil's make-believe, his fantasies he entertained about himself, the mirage he tried to create about a future partnership between Jesus and the devil. And Jesus, by reciting one verse, he brings Satan face-to-face with the God who is there, with the God who has spoken, with the God who is the absolute sovereign of the universe and over every creature in it.

"You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve." Because of Jesus' answer, we can now identify the crux of the matter. Satan wanted Jesus to bow, to partner with him, to join forces and this is a test here of Jesus' allegiance. It's a test of his loyalty. Jesus stood firm. He affirmed God's absolute right of rule and he had absolute, resolute loyalty to God and to God alone.

There may be some of you, hopefully a lot of you, who were thinking to yourselves, man, there is no way I could spot Satan's subtly here. I mean if I were in those shoes, there's no way I'd have the wisdom to discern the nature of this deception, to figure all of this out. Christ stood firm, but he's Christ. I'm pretty sure I'm a goner. That's a humble response. It's a right response. It's a realistic concern.

But you know what? By answering the way Jesus did, he gave us the key to success here. This is the silver bullet. "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve." Jesus's simple answer, it's taken from Deuteronomy 6:13 and Deuteronomy 10:20. That answer, it exposed, it indicted, it condemned, and it countered the fundamental operating principle that drives Satan and all of unbelieving fallen humanity.

Instead of self being at the center, God must be at the center. And Jesus quoted a verse that bound himself, the devil, who is speaking to him, and all creatures God created to worship and serve God and God alone. Worship God, not the self. Serve God, not the self.

Listen, beloved, if you keep that single principle of Scripture at the forefront of your mind, and if it is the fire that drives all your passions and affections, if it is the motivation that governs your every decision and all of your will, you will never fall to the devil's temptation to worship the self. Any of his subtly will be diffused, deflated as you shoot that silver bullet and send him fleeing.

If you worship the Lord your God, if you serve him only, you're gonna never fall to any temptations to love the self or exalt the self, to take a shortcut to honor. And that is because if God is at the center of your heart, he is your all-sufficient, eternal, and infinite reward. You've already got it all. All the kingdoms of the world, all their magnificence, authority, splendor, glory. That's way too small, because God is your reward. If you remain loyal to him, it's because you've



come to realize there is no greater treasure. God is your treasure.

That love of God will then propel your love for others. You will serve God by serving others. And in that sense, all the kingdoms of the earth, they don't represent a pedestal to stand upon. They are not a means to your own glory and exaltation. The kingdoms of the earth, the authority of the earth, they represent a burden to bear. They represent people for whom to sacrifice yourself in service to God.

Jesus lived this way. He thought this way, which is why that verse, at the forefront of his mind, at the center of his heart, it came so quickly from his lips, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve." Since Jesus worshipped God and God alone, nothing else could tempt him. Nothing else could steal his affections. Listen, the glory of the universe, it's not in the universe, it's not in anything in it.

The glory of the universe is the God who created the universe. That's the true glory. Everything else just points to that. Jesus already possessed that reward. God was already his

treasure, so what else could Satan offer to the one who was so contented with God? That's the key for you and me, as well, isn't it? Since Jesus served God alone, the authority that he received from his father, legitimately, I might add, that authority, it was for the purpose of serving others. His authority had nothing to do with personal enrichment, self-aggrandizement.

And in Jesus' case the authority he received from his father, it enabled him to go to the cross, to bear the crushing weight of our sin and to receive the righteous wrath of God. Jesus "took the form of a servant, being born in the form and the likeness of men. Being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross." That's how he used his authority. He used it in the service of God. He used it to sacrifice himself for all who put their faith in him.

Because Jesus would not ally himself with the devil, because he wouldn't take this bargain, it put him on the collision course with the lord of all evil and that's by God's design. The offense the devil took with Jesus' snub in these temptations. The fact that Jesus turned away from this bargain,

the offer of partnership for the simple price of a small token of affirmation. That rejection had to fuel Satan's anger, led all the way to the crucifixion.

The devil would visit Jesus again during his hour when he unleashed on Jesus the power of darkness. And here we see an ingenious instance of divine irony. An example, once again, of God's wisdom, that Satan's role in delivering Jesus over to death at the hands of the Jews and the Romans, it sealed his fate. The cross was the heel that crushed the serpent's head, and the cross became the key to unlock our prison cell, to set us free from sin and Satan and death. I am so thankful, aren't you?

When Jesus quoted this Scripture that indicted Satan, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve." Do you know what? That verse, sadly, it condemns you and me as well. The most fundamental of all of our many sins is that we fail to worship and serve the Lord our God and him alone. We all too often find our loyalties divided. We find ourselves distracted. We find that hook digging into us and our affections and pulling us away, don't we?

All of humanity stands condemned by that single verse. All except one. Jesus Christ never disobeyed that verse, not for one second. He worshipped God and God alone. He loved and worshipped God perfectly. Jesus served God perfectly. He did it to the very end. And he did it to the ultimate point of death on the cross. He was loyal to God alone and, once again, we need to round this out and come to a conclusion here by seeing that Jesus is our hope. He's our only hope.

By trusting in him, by worshipping him, we're protected from the wrath of God for our sins of self-worship. It's idolatry, right? We're forgiven of all of our self-centeredness and pride in him. God has graciously hidden us beneath the robes of Christ's righteousness. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." That is good news, isn't it?

Let's pray. Father, we are so, so grateful to you as we think about this second temptation that the devil brought upon our spotless, perfect Savior. We would, not only would have failed, but we do fall to this temptation. And we fall all the time. It's just a mark of our sin, our rebellion, where we've come from. It just illustrates once again our need for you,

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Father to be gracious to us. So as we've relied upon you in this whole service, help us even now to get the full impact and weight of what we've just learned. That we could unite our hearts, do not let them be divided but unite them in the fear of you, loyalty to you and you alone. We love you in Jesus' name.