

## JESUS, FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, DEFEATS THE DEVIL’S TEMPTATIONS

Luke 4:1-13

Key Verse 4:1-2a, “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.”

On March 9, a Russian airstrike devastated a maternity hospital in the Ukrainian city Mariupol. Three civilian people were killed including an infant and 17 people were injured. A pregnant woman was wounded and attended by emergency workers, but neither she nor her baby survived.<sup>1</sup> It has been twenty-four days since the Russian invasion of Ukraine broke out. As of March 17th, 816 deaths of civilians in Ukraine were verified by the UN rights office (OHCHR).<sup>2</sup> The most vulnerable people—babies, children, pregnant women, and those already suffering from illness and disease are risking their own lives. Over 3.2 million Ukrainians fled as refugees to neighboring countries—Poland, Romania, Moldova, Hungary, and others.<sup>3</sup> The possibility of the use of chemical and nuclear weapons by the Russian army scares people, making them think of the end of the world. We don’t know when the war will end and how many more victims there will be.

But one thing I am convinced of is that the devil and his subordinate evil spirits are manipulating behind the war those who sold their souls to the devil to gain worldly power, authority, and glory. The devil, or Satan, is a murderer, deceiver, and liar (Jn 8:44). His goal is to deceive us, make us commit sins against God, destroy us, and ultimately kill us. The devil hates God’s people, God’s family, and God’s church. He is always prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1Pe 5:8b). Those who are weak in spirit will fall into the devil’s temptation. Their lives, families and churches will be at stake due to their sins. Therefore, Apostle Peter orders us to be alert and of sober mind (1Pe 5:8a). Do you believe that the devil exists and is looking for any opportunity to devour you? If you don’t believe it, you are already being tempted by the devil. His best strategy is to make us believe that the devil doesn’t exist. The word of God clearly exposes the devil’s temptations in human life. Then, how can we overcome it and be victorious in serving God during our lives? Today’s story shows us that Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, defeated the devil’s temptations with the word of God.

The story begins by saying, “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness” (v.1). The Jordan is the place where Jesus was baptized by John. Do you remember what happened when Jesus was baptized? As he was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased” (3:21b-22). The fact that the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus was the anointment of the Spirit of God on the Messiah. Messiah means ‘the anointed One.’ Jesus revealed himself as the Messiah when he preached at a synagogue in Nazareth by quoting the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1a, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me” (Luke 4:18a). When Jesus was anointed by the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2022/03/16/1086982186/russias-strike-on-ukraine-maternity-hospital-is-part-of-a-terrible-wartime-tradi>; <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2022/03/15/fact-check-russian-attack-mariupol-hospital-not-staged/7041649001/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.statista.com/topics/9087/russia-ukraine-war-2022/#topicHeader\\_\\_wrapper](https://www.statista.com/topics/9087/russia-ukraine-war-2022/#topicHeader__wrapper)

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukrainian\\_refugee\\_crisis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukrainian_refugee_crisis)

Holy Spirit, he was empowered and became full of the Holy Spirit. And then, he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness (1). After defeating the devil's temptations, Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (14a). When we read Luke's gospel carefully, we can discover that the Holy Spirit is highlighted in the Messianic ministry of Jesus. Indeed, it was the Holy Spirit who anointed Jesus, filled Jesus, led Jesus, and empowered Jesus.

What does it mean to be full of the Holy Spirit? When we believe in Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit. From then on, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. However, the dwelling of the Holy Spirit doesn't mean the fullness of the Holy Spirit. It is possible that many of us are not full of the Holy Spirit in this moment because the Holy Spirit has been quenched and grieved by our sins. The fullness of the Holy Spirit is a condition that the Holy Spirit overflows in us and controls our mind, emotion, and volition so that we obey God's leading perfectly. Jesus was sinless; thus, he was always full of the Holy Spirit and perfectly led by the Spirit of God during his life on earth. However, we have our sinful natures and commit sins against God repeatedly. In consequence, we lose the fullness of the Holy Spirit and are tempted by the devil due to our own evil desires (James 1:14). Therefore, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit repeatedly. But how? First, we must repent sincerely of our sins. If we don't cleanse ourselves with the precious blood of Jesus through repentance, we cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit. Second, we must seek the presence of the Holy Spirit through the word of God and prayer. We must meet with our Lord Jesus in spirit every day by meditating on the word of God and praying deeply before the presence of our God. Third, we must worship and praise God in spirit and truth with psalms, hymns, songs, and thanksgiving to God in all circumstances (Eph 5:18-20). When we are full of the Holy Spirit, we can discern and overcome the devil's temptations with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by the devil for forty days. We are tempted by our own evil desire. But Jesus was tempted for God's salvation plan. The Greek word for 'tempt' can also mean to 'test.' A temptation is an attempt to entice someone to act contrary to God's will. On the other hand, a test is to prove oneself as obedient and faithful to God. A temptation comes from the devil, while a test comes from God. The context determines which one is intended in a biblical passage. Jesus was tempted by the devil. But in a bigger context, Jesus was tested by God to defeat the devil's temptation and foreshadow the victory of Jesus in God's redemptive history. The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness is contrasted with the temptation of Adam in the garden of Eden. Adam was tempted in a beautiful garden, while Jesus was tempted in a barren wilderness. Adam was tempted in affluence, while Jesus was tempted in hunger. Adam had a companion, while Jesus was absolutely alone. However, Adam fell into sin after one temptation, while Jesus defeated the devil's three temptations in this event. Consequently, Jesus recovered the failure of Adam and rescued humanity from the slavery of Satan. Therefore, we believers can be victorious in Jesus who defeated all the devil's temptations and crushed the head of Satan through his death on the cross and resurrection.

Jesus was tempted by the devil in three aspects: first, bread; second, worldly authority and glory; third, testing God. They are Satan's favorite weapons to attack us too. The first temptation came to Jesus when he was hungry after forty days' fasting (2b). As a human being, Jesus was in an extremely vulnerable condition. How do we feel when we don't eat just one day? We experience hunger pangs with gnawing and painful feelings in our stomach. Our stomach is growling. We feel dizziness, headache, and weakness. We crave for some specific foods like a piece of steak or hamburger. We ransack the refrigerator, pantry, and drawers to find anything to eat. We can't stop thinking about food, and everything looks like food. We feel

hangry, a mixed feeling between hungry and angry. We lose all self-control, become aggressive, and fight with our loved ones. When we are starving, we easily fall into the devil's temptation. The devil is an expert in taking advantage of our weaknesses. He tempted Jesus saying, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread" (3). The devil knew that Jesus was the Son of God; however, he tried to provoke Jesus emotionally by saying, "If you are the Son of God." Satan is very clever in irritating us emotionally and making us commit sin against God. There were many stones in the wilderness; perhaps they all looked like bread. Jesus had power to convert those stones into delicious New York City Bagels. The devil's temptation was very attractive.

But Jesus discerned the devil's intention with the Spirit of God. He discovered that the devil tried to make him an economic king instead of a spiritual king. Hence, Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone'" (4). Jesus counterattacked the devil's temptation with the word of God written in Deuteronomy 8:3b, "Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." When the people of Israel were in the wilderness before entering the promised land that was flowing with milk and honey, God disciplined them with daily bread. They had to remember the word of God and obey it every day to get their daily bread. Through the daily bread training, they learned that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. We have a physical body; thus, we need to eat and drink. We have monthly expenses to pay such as a mortgage or rent, car loan, student loan, insurance, food and groceries, utility bills, internet, cell phone, childcare, school costs, pet food, clothing, entertainment, credit card debt, and so on. Sometimes, we are very anxious about our high expenses that suffocate us. It seems that we need to trim our expenses. Jesus understands our physical needs and teaches us to pray, "Give us today our daily bread" (Mt 6:11). When we pray for our daily bread, we will experience God's provision. However, we humans are also spiritual beings that contain God's image. We cannot be happy if we don't satisfy our spiritual hunger and thirsty. Therefore, we must seek God and fill our spirit with the word of God. We cannot ignore our spiritual needs to satisfy our physical needs, or vice versa. But Jesus made the purpose of our life very clear: "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life" (Jn 6:27a). Our purpose must be Jesus himself who is our bread of life. Jesus taught us what is the right order between our spiritual needs and physical needs: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Mt 6:33). This is a promise of Jesus that has been fulfilled in those who believed and obeyed it. I am one of many witnesses who experienced this promise of God. "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Mt 4:4). I pray that each of us may live on the word of God, seeking first God's kingdom and his righteousness so that we can experience daily provision that comes from God.

The devil was defeated in this temptation of Jesus regarding bread. But he did not pull back. Rather, he continued to tempt Jesus with worldly authority and glory. The devil led Jesus up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world (5). It seems that the devil was already using virtual reality technology. He put an Oculus Quest 2 headset on Jesus and played a video about the glory of all the kingdoms of the world. It might include the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Persian Empire's Persepolis, the Parthenon temple in Greece, the Roman Empire's Colosseum, and others. And then, the devil proposed a false promise saying, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours" (6-7).

We humans always pursue the glory, power, and authority of the world. Please close your eyes for a moment and imagine that you are the King of Saudi Arabia or the Queen of the United Kingdom who has

power, authority, and riches. Imagine that you can enjoy your life living in magnificent palaces and traveling around the world in luxury. Don't you feel excited? Please open your eyes and stop imagining. It is not healthy! We desire to have power and glory because we think that we can be happy when we receive them. For this reason, we humans always have been developing our civilization until now.

The scientific revolution during the last 500 years made humans become powerful and glorious on the planet. Most of us don't suffer from winter cold or summer heat because we produce energy in different ways and run our heating and cooling systems installed in our homes. Most of us don't suffer from hunger because we use machines and produce different kinds of foods. We can take effective medications when we are sick and get successful surgery by virtue of the development of medical science, which lets us live longer. We can travel into space visiting the moon. We can experience the wonders of the world such as the Pyramids of Egypt, the Great Wall of China, the Machu Picchu of the Incas, the Angkor Wat of Cambodia, etc. from the comfort of our homes simply by using metaverse technology. We can meet face to face with anyone from the world through SNS or video chat. So, are we happier than before? I doubt it. We are facing serious environmental and ecological problems. The Coronavirus has been severely affecting us, having caused more than 6 million deaths so far. Many scientists warn that different kinds of viruses will appear and attack us continually. Wealth inequality has grown even more and as many as 811 million people still go hungry in the world.<sup>4</sup> The financial crisis of one country or one region collapses the global economy. Wicked and arrogant political leaders wage wars, kill innocent civilians, and threaten citizens all over the world with nuclear weapons. Yuval Harari, a historian, and the author of the bestseller *Sapiens*, ends his book saying, "Is there anything more dangerous than dissatisfied and irresponsible gods [humans] who don't know what they want?"<sup>5</sup> This is the world that the devil offers us when we worship him. Do you want to accept this proposal of the devil?

Jesus discerned the devil's intention with the Holy Spirit and answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only'" (8). Our God is the only object of worship. We cannot serve both God and money (Mt. 6:24). We cannot worship God, expecting the worldly glory that the devil offers. To worship God only means to attribute honor, reverence, and worth to the triune God only. To worship God is to offer our whole being as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God (Ro 12:1). To worship and serve God only must not be theoretical, but practical in our daily lives. We can worship God by seeking the presence of God every day through prayer. We can worship God by obeying one word of God daily. We can serve God by helping others through good deeds and the gospel of Jesus Christ. We can serve God by participating in God's work of salvation. I pray that each of us may worship and serve God only throughout our lives.

The devil was defeated in the second round too. But he challenged Jesus again with a temptation involving testing God. The devil led Jesus to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple (9a). The pinnacle of the temple was so high that Jesus could feel dizzy. The devil tempted Jesus saying, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here" (9b). He also quoted the word of God, "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone" (10,11). The devil was so forced into a corner that he used the word of God to tempt Jesus. But he ripped it from its contextual meaning. According to the devil's theory, there should be no martyrs. Why did the devil take Jesus to the temple of Jerusalem? Jerusalem is

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.actionagainsthunger.org/world-hunger-facts-statistics>

<sup>5</sup> Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015), 416.

the Holy City where Jesus had to die on the cross to fulfill God's redemptive history. And the temple was the center of Jerusalem and crowded with many people. What would happen if Jesus threw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple and people saw that the angels lifted him up in their hands? They would be amazed by the miracle of God and believe that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus could be the Messiah without suffering and dying on the cross. But was it God's plan? No! In fact, Jesus could not be the Messiah without death on the cross. The divine purpose for Jesus was to be glorified through suffering and death on the cross.

Jesus detected the devil's intention with the Holy Spirit and defeated him with the word of God saying, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'" (12). We desire to live an easy life. We don't want to suffer, even less die. We want to receive the glory of resurrection without dying. The devil knows it very well, so he tempts us to live an easier life saying, "Don't suffer to serve God. Enjoy your life. You will be happy." But is it true? No! No Cross, No Crown! Jesus taught us, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Lk 9:23). When we follow Jesus, denying our sinful desires and taking up our cross of mission, we can be true disciples of Jesus and receive the crown of life when Jesus comes again. I pray that all of us can be true disciples of Jesus following Jesus' way of cross and resurrection.

After all these temptations, the devil left Jesus (13). But he would come to Jesus again, particularly in the passion period of Jesus. The devil is still working diligently in the world trying to attack us, our families, and our churches with different temptations. What are the strongest temptations in your current life? As I told you before, each of us is tempted by his/her own evil desires. 1 John 2:16 says, "For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world." The devil attacks us with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These days, many people including Christians are addicted to pornography and video games. It is not surprising that the devil has made pornography as accessible as a Google search. Sadly, many young people's lives are ruined by pornography, which gives them a perverted view of people. Young people also waste many hours playing violent video games, instead of growing in their humanity by reading books or learning a noble talent. Our families are very vulnerable to financial problems and fall into the devil's temptation abandoning God's calling. Our marriages are broken by blame, anger, adultery, etc. The devil whispers, "Divorce is not a big deal." Church leaders are tempted by the devil through self-reliance, loneliness, and pride. The devil tries to divide our churches by using anger, hatred, and selfishness. If we are not alert spiritually, we will be devoured by the devil.

How can we overcome the devil's temptations and serve our God victoriously? The answer is very clear from today's message: We must be full of the Holy Spirit and the word of God. We must repent and pray earnestly to meet our glorious God and be filled with the Holy Spirit. We must love the word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit, by reading it, meditating on it, memorizing it, and obeying it. We must worship our Lord Jesus Christ with all our hearts, souls, and strength, with spiritual songs and thanksgivings. Then, our spirits will be revived and empowered by the Holy Spirit to defeat the devil's temptations and glorify God. May God help each of us to be full of the Holy Spirit and the word of God to defeat the devil's temptations and be victorious in Jesus Christ who already won the victory in this spiritual warfare. Amen.