

If You Are The Son Of God **Matthew 4:1-11**

(Being out of town at a Higher Things Retreat in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, I did not preach a sermon for Invocavit at Zion/St. Peter/St. John. In lieu of this year's, I pulled this one from 2014, which is not on the website as the sermon to be posted for Invocavit 2018.)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

If you are the Son of God, then why did you let my child die in utero?
If you are the Son of God, why did you let me fail that exam?
If you are the Son of God, why did you let my mother die of cancer?
If you are the Son of God, why do you let evil exist in the world?
If you are the Son of God, then why won't you heal the arthritis in my neck?
If you are the Son of God, bring back global warming – or at least warming in Embarrass.

I am sure you all have your own way to use the line with which Satan prefaced two of his temptations in the wilderness, "If you are the Son of God..." What would be, or what is your own request, demand, complaint, or other issue with God. Or should I speak more clearly, how does Satan get you to word the phrase you use by which you hide your idolatry?

It all began way back in the day, back in the days of the garden. Adam and Eve were without sin and Satan came and said four words, "Did God actually say?" After they'd eaten of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they sowed fig leaves together to cover themselves. God finds them and confronts them in their sin, He asks, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

Adam blames Eve – and more importantly, blames God for giving Eve to him. And then Eve blames the serpent. What is interesting is that God simply asked if they'd eaten of the fruit that He had commanded them not to eat. But did you notice that neither says, "Yes, I was disobedient to you and did what you have forbidden – please forgive me." Yes, both say they ate, but both blame someone else for what they, by their own choice, put into their own mouths.

It all began when what happened? When they doubted God's Word, "Did God really say?"

The greatest temptation ever since has been to doubt God's Word. Don't we doubt God's Word? Where were you God: when mom died, when the tornado hit, when the tsunami destroyed, when the drunk hit the car... Where are you God: in my arthritis; in my cancer; in my depression; in my broken marriage; in my lack of employment. If only you understood how hard life is, God. If you only knew the trials and temptations we endure.

Really? Do we want to go there? Did you hear our text of what happened to Him in the wilderness? Have you ever gone on a fast for forty days? Have you ever walked past a donut when you aren't really hungry? (I know I can't do it.) How easy was it to be without food for forty days while He had the divine power to turn rocks into bread? In fact, Jesus had the power to make a meal of steak, lobster, twice baked potatoes, and glass of Pinot Noir out of nothing – and

He didn't – because He was living on every word that comes from the mouth of God?

Does the Son of God know the loss of friends to death? Does the Son of God know what it was like to be abandoned by his friends? Does the Son of God know the feeling of being betrayed by those whom He loved as dearest friends?

Do you know what it is like to have the flesh stripped from your body by a cat-o-nine-tails? How does it feel to have the community which rejoiced to have you come into their midst turn around and speak vile evil of you, lie about you, and then beg the leaders to punish you and have you crucified?

Are you the Son of God? Jesus responds. "Yes, I am. Peter, put up your sword, I could have twelve legions of angels come down right now to defend me. I could stop all that is going to soon take place. I know what is coming, my friend. I know what you will do when this trial come upon me, how you will deny me, even with cursing. I know John will run away so fast that he will leave his clothes behind. I know that the Chief priests of my church will lie about me. I know that Pilate will succumb to the popular pressure and have his soldiers beat me, then strip me naked and nail me to a cross. I know that people will mock me and spit upon me."

Are you the Son of God? "Yes I am! I am the only One who can save you from sin and death. I will be obedient to my Father when Adam and Eve were not. I will trust my Father in all things, even when I know He forsakes me to the torments of hell, I will trust Him with my very spirit. I do not want equality with God, but I take upon myself your idolatry, your dissatisfaction over all that We have done for you as God, and I will put your sins to death with my death, and will bury them in my own tomb. And I will rise three days later to proclaim your victory over idolatry and all sin complete."

Are you the Son of God? "Yes, I am. I am the bread of life that comes to you in the wilderness. I take your stone hearts of unbelief and make them believing hearts, feeding you and nourishing you with the bread of my own flesh. I feed you forgiveness and give you new life."

Are you the Son of God? "Yes, I am. I am the Word that comes from the mouth of God. I am the very forgiveness you hear proclaimed, for it is why I came in your flesh that first Advent, to purchase that forgiveness so that I might now deliver it to you."

Are you the Son of God? "Yes! Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest for your souls." Amen.