**The Encounter in the Wilderness**

**The Word**

Read together Matthew 3:13-4:11

**The Big Idea**

In the wilderness, Satan tries to drive a wedge between Jesus and his Father, tempting him to doubt, distrust, and then disobey his Father. Jesus models to us a ruthless trust in God through thick and thin, and we can call on him in our times of temptation to receive help.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Consider Satan’s basic strategy as articulated on Sunday: laying before us compelling ideas in the context of trying circumstances that pull us away from trust in and obedience to our loving Father. How does this change your view of Satan, and what specific issues does this raise for you?

2. Consider the essence of each of the three temptations. Which temptation feels most relevant to you in this season of life, and how can your group be praying for you or encouraging you in that?

3. On Sunday we saw in Jesus a man who was fully devoted to God and whose faith and obedience would never crack under any circumstance. Consider this idea of celebrating the obedience of Jesus more regularly, especially in the midst of our own failings. How often do you celebrate his faithfulness, and what might it look like to do that more regularly?

**Digging Deeper**

We were invited to consider the full humanity of Jesus. Consider these two verses:

a. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Hb 2:18)

b. During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered. (Hb 5:7-8)

How might embracing the full humanity of Jesus effect your relationship with him and your own spiritual journey?

**Sermon Outline**

I. The context of the temptation

A. The baptism of Jesus

1. Jesus sees heaven opened and the Spirit descend on him empowering him for his public ministry

2. Jesus hears these wonderful words from his Father: “You are my son, I love you, I am well pleased with you.”

3. This event grounds him in his identity as the Beloved of God

B. The wilderness

1. All tangible evidences of being the Beloved of God are stripped away. There is nothing in his circumstances that would affirm God’s deep love for him.

2. This is a test, a power encounter, to see what Jesus is made of.

3. We need to embrace the full humanity of Jesus in moments like this and realize that these would be genuinely compelling temptations. Hebrews tells us, “he was tempted in every way as we are” and “Although he was a son he [had to] learn obedience by what he suffered”

II. Satan, the Tempter

A. His is a dark, sinister, spiritual being; very smart and sophisticated and anti-God

B. His goal: To drive a wedge in Jesus’ relationship with his Father, to create doubt, distrust, and ultimately disobedience

C. His means: Suggesting compelling ideas in the midst of challenging circumstances.

1. John Mark Comer: Satan is like a Russian hacker embarking on an underground disinformation campaign

2. Pastor Adrian: Satan is alive and well in America. Consider the false but alluring ideas that have taken hold of the culture

a. Materialism: life consists in the abundance of possessions

b. The idea of the family has been eroded

c. The basic right of the unborn has been eroded through ideas of personal freedom

3. And each of us has personal messages he speaks that are powerful

e.g. “God is so disappointed with you, You deserve better than this, You have to be in control, etc.”

D. So, the essence of the temptation is this:

Will Jesus continue to cling to trust in and obedience to his Father, or will these alluring ideas in the midst of challenging circumstances cause him to crack?

III. The Three Temptations

A. The temptation away from dependence to independence (v. 2-4)

1. Jesus has the power and right to provide for himself and relieve his hunger

2. But he harkens to Israel’s experience in the wilderness and God’s lesson for them there which was dependence. God led them through circumstances that brought them to the end of themselves and forced day-to-day dependence, and he revealed himself as provider.

3. Jesus chooses the way of dependence on God’s provision and timing over self-reliance

B. The temptation away from trust to “sign-based certainty” (v. 5-7)

1. After 40 days of hunger and suffering, it would have been easy for Jesus to doubt the Father’s word at his baptism, “you are my beloved son.”

2. Jumping from the temple and watching God save him would provide a certain sign that God’s love and favor was still with him.

3. Again, Jesus harkens back to Israel’s experience in the wilderness where they constantly tested God and demanded signs from him

4. He chooses simple faith in the word of God (“You are my beloved”) over demands for signs and certainty

C. The temptation away from worship of God to idol worship as a quick and easy alternative (v. 8-10)

1. Satan offers Jesus the very thing he wants (the kingdoms of the world) in a way that is much cheaper, quicker, and easier than the Father’s say of giving him that very same thing.

2. When God’s ways seem too slow, humbling, and painful, we often go to false gods (the gods of money, drink, sex, retaliation, etc.) because they deliver what we want

3. Jesus chooses total devotion and worship of God and full embrace of his plan for his life, even if it is slower and more painful

IV. Conclusion

A. We learn from this encounter that Jesus is fully devoted to his Father. He will never crack or cave but will cling in faith and obedience through thick and thin.

B. Where are you facing temptation

1. Actively call on Jesus to help you in temptation. Hebrews 2:18 says, “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

2. When you fail in temptation, use that opportunity to actively celebrate Jesus’ obedience through every one of his temptations, because his obedience is our salvation. Had he failed at any moment, he would not be the sinless sacrifice for our sins, and we’d still be under God’s condemnation. So rather than wallow in shame, turn to Jesus and celebrate his obedience.