

## JESUS IN THE WILDERNESS - Adam Heather

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

**Matt 3v13-4v11**

Recent recurring themes have been Purity, Identity, Faithfulness and Promise of Scripture. All converge here. 3 of the gospels include the story but it is unique in that there were no witnesses in the wilderness so Jesus must have told the disciples afterwards for a reason. It happened as Jesus moved into his public ministry.

At his baptism the Trinity is evident: Affirmation from the Father to the Son by the Spirit who then leads him to the Wilderness where he is tempted (better, "tested" (Greek "piradzo"), meaning to reveal and expose). Not all testing is bad but when it comes, can we recognise God's voice? And do we know what to do?

Jesus was baptised and faced 40 days in the Wilderness. This echoes the Israelites' journey (Deut 8v2-5). They failed the test - it was easier to get them out of Egypt than it was to get Egypt out of them! A diamond has 4 characteristics: cut, carat, clarity and colour. The last 2 are most important and raise the value. Jesus passed the test, quoting Deut 6, 7 and 8. His heart held purity and clarity.

**Test 1: Matt 4v1-4 What sort of Son?**

The tempter is an evil creature, opposed to God (variously known as Tester, Satan, Devil - titles, not names). There is malevolent force behind it. The weapon is DOUBT. Jesus had been affirmed by his Father (Matt 3v17) and the test was his loyalty and faithfulness to what his Father said.

When God leads us into a season of testing he has already given us what we need to pass. To be really alive, we need our identity and purpose to come from God. Like Jesus, trust God the Father more than food. Don't let our circumstances question our belovedness. God loves us too much to leave us where we are.

**Test 2: Matt 4v5-7 What sort of God?**

Tempter quoted Ps 91 but this psalm begins: *Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."* The best lies have the most truth. And this test goes back to Gen 3. Can Jesus trust God? Can we trust God? God is all we need in any situation (Deut 6)

**Test 3: Matt 4v8-10 What sort of Kingdom?**

The tempter has influence over the world (ie. Eph 6v12) and challenged Jesus' destiny as King and Messiah. But Jesus didn't just come for the Earth, he came for Heaven too. The devil couldn't offer that. Jesus has more authority (Matt 28v18) and had a visceral reaction: "Get behind me satan". This is the same reaction to Peter (see Matt 16v13-23). The test was to take power without sacrificial love but Jesus would not compromise. The devil left Jesus and on future encounters with demons they knew they were defeated.

Jesus told his disciples of this encounter to assure them of his faithfulness to overcome evil and when we're tested, we can rely on the promises of God.

**So, how do we face being tested?** Recognise the whispers of the accuser. 15th century art showed satan as a monk with taloned feet rather than a red cloak and horns. Harder to recognise but shame, doubt, distortion of truth are clues to the lies we're fed. A heart of settled trust in God will stand us in good stead. Question the voices and know that we are the beloved son and daughters of a God who loves us, cares for us, is shaping us and committed to seeing us flourish.

**For Reflection in Collective:**

- Maybe some feel in the Wilderness now. If they feel comfortable in sharing, why not pray for them first?
- Getting Egypt out of the Israelites was challenging! We're "in the world but not of it" (Jn 17v14-15). How can we take the "world" out of us?
- How can we develop a "heart of settled trust"?