

Every Word

Matthew 4:1-11

Sunday, February 26, 2023 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

Matthew 4:4

⁴ But He answered and said, "It is written, *'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'*"

We are dependent on a trustworthy God

- Introduction

Perhaps one way to look at this passage before us today is to consider the value of authority. No one should be placed in authority unless they are willing to submit to authority. Otherwise you have demagogues in charge. This, perhaps, applies to spiritual power in prayer and in life. If we want to live in spiritual authority we need to submit to the greater authority. The Roman soldier who came to Jesus for help with his sick servant (Matthew 8:5-13) understood this when He told Jesus that he was not worthy to have Christ come into his house. "But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." Jesus responded by saying that He had not found such great faith, not even in Israel. I want to learn more about such great faith, and I think Matthew 4:4 gives us a key insight.

- Context

Jesus on the Mount of Temptation

Assuming that John baptized Jesus on the south end of the Jordan River, a little east of Jericho, then Jesus walked up to the mountainside overlooking that most ancient village. It has been home to a Greek Orthodox monastery since the fourth century. There, near the site of Israel's final entrance into the Promised Land, Jesus fasts one day for every year that they wandered in the wilderness, and toward the end, he is hungry and wondering how to find food. Satan shows up in an effort to make Jesus fail this test, just like the children of Israel failed theirs.

Is He willing to wait on the Father, even when it is tough to wait on the Father?

During one point in the trial, Satan suggests that Jesus turn these stones in to bread, something that He might actually be able to do as the Son of God. Jesus replied that men do not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

Verse four

background from Hebrew Scripture

The quote is from Deuteronomy 8:3, in which Moses tells the people this: "So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord." Note that the Lord allowed them to hunger, to force them to the very edge to see if they would trust Him, that, actually, they had to trust Him.

Rock climbing with Middle School students in Tennessee

Years ago I spent the summer running the Middle School program for a Methodist Church in Oklahoma. It included taking the kids in a van for a week at a camp in Tennessee. Part of the program included rock climbing. Part of the training included scaling a rock face of about fifteen to twenty feet, then leaning back about twenty five degrees. I am not a fan of heights, but I did it. Then, leaning back at an angle that would surely make me to do a back dive to the ground below if the rope broke, I heard the instructor ask me if I was holding on to the rope. "Yes," I said. He asked me to let go and hold my hands spread-eagle out to my sides. He wanted to see if I would trust the rope.

trustworthy-40 years without worn-out shoes

- Application: Sovereignty gives you freedom to try new things, to face challenges in a new way. It does not give us freedom to indulge in the myth of self-sufficiency. Our moment to moment existence depends upon the Father. The people of Israel found the Lord to be trustworthy for food even when hungry and out in a wasteland. They found the Lord to be trustworthy in circumstances that we have never experienced. Can we determine now that our Lord will be trustworthy when our lives, ever dependent upon Him, go through challenges that seem like a wasteland to us?

One of the main themes of this text is that of dependence. Humanity is utterly dependent upon the Lord. Israel out in that wilderness was utterly dependent upon the Lord, and we are dependent upon the Father. And He let them be challenged. Even Jesus was hungry at the end of the 40 days. But an equally important theme is that the Father is trustworthy, and we can depend upon Him.