

If you turn with me and you copy the word of God to Luke's gospel, we're gonna be in the temptation of Christ these next few weeks. I don't know what I was thinking when I wrote the title for next week's message, Trust Testing Limits, Trusting God While Life Hurts. I can't quite connect that to the next temptation, so maybe change that title for next week. I apologize. Luke 4. The Word of God opened before us. Let's pray. O Lord, our God and our Father, we thank you for our Savior. Savior who shares our nature yet without sin. Savior, O God, who has been tempted yet in all ways such as we are and never once yielded. I pray this morning or this afternoon,

O Lord, as we work our way through these temptations, beginning with the first, that you will grant me great clarity of mind, warmth of heart, and discernment, O Lord, to know what to say, what to leave unsaid. And pray, Father, that you will bring the word through me this afternoon to your people, your children gathered here, that they might grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. And if there be any here, O Lord, who do not yet know you, we pray, Father, that you would speak to them as well and call them out of darkness into your marvelous light, for Jesus' sake. Amen. This is the word of God. And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit,

returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for 40 days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days, and when they were ended, he was hungry. The devil said to him, if you are the son of God, command this stone to become bread. And Jesus answered him, it is written, man shall not live by bread alone. And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time and said to him, to you I will give all this authority and their glory for it has been delivered to me and I give it to whom I will. If you then will worship me, it will all be yours. And Jesus answered him, it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and him alone shall you serve. And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, if you are the son of God, throw yourself down from here for it is written, he will command his angels concerning you to guard you. And on their hands, they will bear you up lest you strike your foot against the stone. And Jesus answered him, It is said, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test. When the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him. until an opportune time. Amen. The grass withers and the

flower falls off, but the word of God endures forever. So we see our Savior here move from the height of heaven to the depths of hell. In the previous passage, he was being baptized, and he received a word from the pinnacle of heaven. You are my beloved

son in whom I am well pleased. And now he goes out into the wilderness where he faces the devil and a word from the pit of hell. If you are the son of God, make these stones into bread. We notice that Jesus didn't end up in the wilderness by accident. He was led there by the spirit. that God did to him what we beg him not to do to us. We pray, Jesus teaches us to pray, lead me not into temptation. And here God himself leads his son into temptation, and we're praying, we pray that prayer in the Lord's Prayer, we're praying, Lord, do not do to me what you did to your son. He can stand, I cannot. Do not lead me to be exposed to the temptations and to the temptations of Satan for I will surely be swept away in a moment. Now there are lots of contrasts going on here. You notice the previous words that we have the genealogy of Jesus and it ends with Christ being the son of Adam, the son of God. And so there's a wonderful contrast here. You have a contrast between Adam and Jesus in temptation. Luke is making the point that where Adam fell, Jesus stood. And the contrast is great. Adam was tempted in the garden paradise of Eden with his belly full of all of the fruit of all of the trees that God allowed him to eat to his heart's content. And Christ is tempted not in the garden but in the wilderness. And notice during those wilderness days, he's being tempted for 40 days. We'll come back to that again in a second. But he was tempted all of those days. The temptation now represents the climax of Satan's temptation. When Christ was at his weakest, he's hungry, his belly is empty, he's in ketosis, he's feeling weak. and weakened by the fast. And at the weakest moment, Satan comes with these last three infernal suggestions. Satan brings his most powerful, his most persuasive temptations to Christ at his moment of greatest weakness in the wilderness. And you remember back in Genesis 3, we said one of Satan's three steps of temptation. He attacks weakness, he spreads doubt, and he sweetens sin. And we see Satan attack Jesus in his weakness here, and you can expect him to do that also. When you're hungry, when you're angry, when you're lonely, when you're tired, you can expect the devil to come in like a flood. Now the wilderness here, Kent Hughes in his wonderful book of sermons on Luke 4 described it like this. The wilderness setting was dramatic. The inhabited part of Judea perched on the backbone of southern Palestine. Between this inhabited hill country and the Dead Sea stretched a terrible wilderness called Jeshimon, which means the devastation. Thus the backdrop for the temptation was a desolate, monotonous wasteland, like that in the forlorn surrealism of a Dali painting, an anti-Eden. In the foreground sat the weary, 40 days hungry Christ. Before him moved the resplendent figure of Satan, radiating power and promise, elegant evil. The first Adam fell to

the gorgeous serpent in the glories of Eden, and now the second Adam faced Satan's alluring presence amidst the barren desolation of the wilderness. So there's a temptation between Adam and Christ here. Now you notice Jesus is being tempted to doubt his identity. Satan says to him in a sense, if you are the son of God, make these stones into bread. if you're the son of God. But more than that, it's not just a temptation to doubt his identity, it's actually a temptation for Christ to doubt the word of his father, because his father has just told him from heaven, you are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. So he has the word of God freshly given, and just like Adam in the garden, when God comes to Adam, has God said, Satan is not just tempting Christ to doubt his identity, he's tempting Christ to doubt the word of his father. And you notice, as Christ responds to the temptation, and it's interesting, a lot of commentators get bent out and try to think, what's Satan really getting at in these temptations? and they go into all kinds of machinations behind the words of the devil, and it's all fanciful and mostly false. The secret to understanding the temptation is not found in the temptation of Satan. The secret of getting to the heart of the temptation is found in the answer Jesus gives. Jesus gives the perfect riposte to every satanic suggestion. So the secret is to analyze the words of Jesus, not the words of the liar. Satan answers the temptation head on and he does so with three climactic it is writtens. And you'll notice if you know your Old Testament that each of Christ's answers come from the book of Deuteronomy. the second giving of the law. And that's important, because Luke is also drawing a contrast here, not just between Adam and Christ, but between Christ and Israel, and Israel's wandering in the wilderness. They wandered in the wilderness for 40 days, you remember. sorry, 40 years, and Christ is tempted in the wilderness for 40 days. There's a parallel of 40 points out to that. And Christ, using the book of Deuteronomy, he could have quoted any scripture to answer the devil, he quotes the book of Deuteronomy. And that's also significant because you remember the book of Deuteronomy was given at the end of Israel's 40 years in the wilderness to explain why they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years and to explain the lessons God intended them to learn, the tests God intended them to undergo, and the purpose behind it all. And what Israel forgot, God gives the book of Deuteronomy to teach the next generation to remember. And that's really, really important. And Christ selects his first answer from Deuteronomy 8. It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God. Luke doesn't record the second half of the sentence. I think Matthew does in his recounting of the temptation. But that's okay, Luke just records

some of what Christ said. And if you turn back to that passage of scripture a second, it's helpful. It's always a good thing to do. The Bible will often quote a verse from the Old Testament, and the Jews of Christ's day would know that the whole context of that verse, like if I quoted, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, you know Psalm 23 well enough that the whole Psalm, I trust, will come into your mind. I don't need to quote the whole Psalm. Well, the Jews knew the whole Bible that way, and Satan certainly did as well. And so all Christ had to do was mention one thing and it brought everything else into memory. So if you go back to Deuteronomy, this is one of the great chair passages of the book of Deuteronomy that explains the theme of the book and the reason behind the season of Israel wandering in the wilderness. Read the first six verses. The whole commandment that I command you today, you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers, the land they did not possess. because they sinned is the land you must possess. And if you're going to do that, you've got to learn the lessons they fail to learn. You've got to pass the tests they fail to pass. And you shall remember, verse two, the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these 40 years in the wilderness. God was the one leading you. That he might, and God is the one leading Christ out into the wilderness to be tempted. And it's interesting, when tests and tribulations come upon us, tests that are designed to prove the faithfulness of God, very often you and I view those tests as a reason to doubt the faithfulness of God. You remember the line in Genesis 22, now God tested Abraham. Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and kill him on the mountain, I'll show you. Remember Ralph Davis in class stopping in one of the quintessentially Dr. Davis moments, and he said, now boys, he said, always remember, you know Abraham is being tested. God did not let Abraham into that side of the bargain, as it were. Abraham had no idea. He just received the word, go kill your son. And God lets you know that he's being tested. Abraham didn't know any more than Job knew the scenes of Job one whenever Satan comes into the throne room. Job was not privy to that piece of the puzzle, but you are. that God led you these 40 years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart. That the whole purpose of the wilderness wanderings was to test Israel to show their heart. We often think of tests and trials as things that grow us, and they do. But first of all, they show us up for who we really are. When a trial comes, before you grow through the trial, that trial will reveal what you are today. And these trials and these tests in the wilderness were designed to show the heart of Israel.

And in like fashion, the temptations of Jesus are designed to show the heart of Jesus and just how well you can trust him to be your savior. that he might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And all of these tests were designed to put Israel under pressure to see if they would, under pressure, obey God or revert to disobedience. Would they go God's way or would they go their own way? And he humbled you and let you hunger. Now you remember, if you read back in Exodus and Numbers, every time Israel hungered, they thought it was a sign that God had abandoned them. And they grumbled against Moses and they grumbled against God. But Moses here and behind Moses' God is reminding Israel, when you hungered, I was the one who let you hunger. It wasn't bad luck. It wasn't the environment of the wilderness where you couldn't grow wheat. I was the one who let you be hungry. Every trial falleth from above, just like every blessing. He humbled you and let you hunger. He didn't leave you hungry. Fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know. After they grumbled, God sent the manna, and it came every morning. And God gave very precise instructions about how much to gather, not to keep it over to the next day, and not to gather any on the Lord's day. But it was a test to see if Israel would learn to depend upon food that they had no idea from whence it came. They didn't know, their fathers didn't know, but they had to be confident that God knew and that God had promised it and it would come day after day after day. And the whole purpose behind the manna was not to save Israel from looking for a Chick-fil-A by the exits on the off-ramps on the wilderness journey, but it was designed, Moses says, that you would know to make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. To teach you the lesson that what goes into your mouth is much less important than what comes out of my mouth, God says. We often forget that. We stress and struggle about all of the lacks, all of the things God hasn't done on our schedule, in our way, according to our desires and delights and hopes and fears. These very tests are often designed to see When it seems like God's abandoned you, when it seems like your needs are not being met, will you revert to obedience or disobedience? Verse four, your clothing did not wear out on you, and your foot did not swell these 40 years. God provided for them food, and he protected and sustained them physically. Verse five, know then, looking back to God's past faithfulness, know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord disciplines, the Lord your God disciplines you. So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. What God is saying

here, in the wilderness, the good days, which were few, and the bad days, which were many, you needed to learn that God had not abandoned you, that God was disciplining you as a man disciplines his son. Now, you can see the immediate parallel, can't you? Because who's Jesus? He's the son of God. What's happening in the wilderness? He's hungry, he's starving. It seems he's been abandoned to the enemy of the soul, Satan. The angels will come soon to strengthen them, but there are no angels there right now. And the very question at stake is, are you God's son, Jesus? Because look at yourself, you're starving, you're emaciated, you've lost 20 or 30 pounds after a month's fasting. You don't look like God's son. I don't suspect, Jesus, you feel like God's son. Perhaps you're not God's son. And the lesson here is will Jesus remember that his father is disciplining him, training him, proving him? Or is he going to build his theology on his circumstances and think, well, God hasn't given me any food, I'm starving, maybe Satan's right. And that's the kind of logic you and I fall for every single day of our lives. So you shall keep the commandment of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. To fear God doesn't mean we walk in terror of God. To fear God means we're so gripped by reverence for God that nothing else matters but his smile and his frown. If you cast your mind back to whenever you were a teenager and you feared human beings, And they're the nearest thing to God we've ever met in the flesh. They're made in the image of God. And their frown feels terrible and their smile feels wonderful. And you remember as a teenager how it was so easy to be bought and sold by the smiles of a few peers and by the frowns of a few peers. and how easy it is to be controlled by the smiles of men and the frowns of men. And the Bible calls that the fear of man, which brings a snare. But the fear of God is like that, but it couldn't be more different at the same time. A person who fears God doesn't really care what men think. He's not a jerk, you understand, but he doesn't care what men think because he's so concerned by what God thinks. And is God smiling or is God frowning? And that's the lesson. So back to Luke four this morning. If you are the son of God, Make these stones. Make these bread. Command these stones to become bread. And that's interesting as well. It wouldn't be sinful. I mean, God is, Christ is God the Son in the flesh. He can do whatever he wants. in his divine nature. He's the son of God. He's totally within his rights. He made the universe with words. It was his voice that shattered the darkness. And all those let there be's at the beginning, let there be light. And there was light. Let us make man in our image.

He was part of that conversation. He was part of the creative fate of God that made the universe, the Milky Way, Arcturus in the heavens, the sun, the moon, and all of the stars. He made them with words. He made the mountains and the fields and the rivers and the seas, the oceans and the great whales and sea monsters and the lion and the bear. and the hummingbird and the mosquito. He made them all and he made all human beings and he filled this world with such wondrous glory. He is the genius behind all of the laws of thermodynamics and molecular physics that hold the universe together. He made those things. He's quite within his right to say to stones, become bread and solve the hunger problem. And that's the genius of Satan because unlike us, right, Jesus doesn't have a sinful nature. He never wanted to sin. We have to stop ourselves, we're like an errant dog. When I'm walking my dog, Baxter, he understands heel, he just doesn't like heeling. And he hasn't been trained well enough, and it's my fault. He doesn't walk, I'll say heel, he comes back into heel, and I'm walking along, and I'm doing my memory verses with my phone, and he starts to kind of, he looks up at me once, The second time, and he starts edging forward, and I'm going, heel! And he comes back again, and then, and I'm back to my memory verses again, walking along, and he looks up at me again, twice, starts moving forward, and it eventually gets pretty annoying, and I'll go, dog, when I say heel, I mean heel! I'll give him a short, sharp shock, right? And our hearts are wayward. We want to sin. Jesus never once wanted to sin. The desire to sin is sinful. The fathers called it concupiscence. Our desires run along with our sinful natures. We want to sin. Jesus never wanted to sin. Now how could he be tempted then? Well, he was tempted to embrace, for example, it would have been sin for Jesus to want to be abandoned by God to hell on the cross. Unless his father had commanded him. And so when the devil offers a plausible alternative to the cross, he's not actually appealing to Christ, to an evil nature in Christ of which there was none. He was actually appealing to the goodness of his nature. Jesus wanted God. He wanted to be with God. That was a good desire. And so the temptation was, do you really want to be abandoned by God? Really? And that was a temptation far stronger than the temptations you and I face in our hearts. And Christ withstood them all. Satan doesn't have to use his best logic to hook and land you. We're like a sandcastle that's swept away by the first wavelet of the incoming tide. Christ is like the cliffs of Dover that have stood firm through the years and faced the onslaught of the hurricane of Satan's temptations and never once crumbled and never once was eroded. He was faithful and true and solid and steadfast. And so Satan here is tempting Christ, be the God you are. Prove it to me, prove it to yourself. And I'm indebted to Ted Donnelly

for this insight. In fact, much of what I'm preaching from these verses are written in my mind from hearing Ted preaching these temptations decades ago, and they're just amazing sermons. If you can find them, they're worth a listen. But Ted said, Here's the temptation, be the God you are. And Christ, the first words out of Christ's mouth, show his humility. What's the first word out of his mouth? Man shall not live by bread alone. What's Christ saying? He says, oh Satan, If I was here in my divine nature and in my divine person, I'd have the right to make these stones into bread. But that's precisely what I am not, and it's why I am not here. I'm not here to be God, I'm here to be man. As God, I do what I want, when I want, and where I want, but as man. I live to obey my Heavenly Father and as man I eat when He says, tells me to eat and not a second before. It doesn't matter how hungry I am. It doesn't matter how hard you push. I am here to be man. Man shall not live by bread alone. And though every other man has refused to embrace that moniker, every other man tries to become God. In the Garden of Eden, Adam, you know, if you eat this fruit, you'll become like God, Satan said. And Adam was like hooked and landed. Oh, that's wonderful. And he reaches up above himself to become like God when he already was like God, perfectly in the image of God. And here Jesus, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself nothing. He emptied himself, Paul says, not by losing his divine nature. Wesley's wrong, he did not empty himself of all but love, that's not true. Without ceasing to be what he'd always been, he became something he'd never been before. He became a man, and as a man, he became a servant. He emptied himself not by losing anything, but by adding something, the form of a bond servant. And he came to serve and not be served, and give his life as a ransom for many. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God. Isn't he lovely, Jesus? This is your savior this morning. Adam fell and filled the graveyards of the world in every generation with the corpses of men and women and boys and girls and even little babies. And by precisely the same logic, Adam, Christ, the second Adam, didn't fall, he stood. And your salvation this afternoon is rooted and grounded not on your obedience, praise the Lord, but on his. And because it's founded on his obedience, it can never fail. God has saved you not on the basis of deeds which you have done in righteousness, but according to his mercy by the washing of regeneration and by renewal of the Holy Spirit, so that having been justified by his grace, the grace of Christ that has appeared, bringing salvation to all men. We might have solid assurance

and hope. Now quickly, I need to let you go on this afternoon. So Christ here, before He's our example, He's our Savior. And you can never take Him as your example until you have Him as your Savior. And if you don't know Christ as your Savior this morning, I want to call you to trust Him. not by works that you have done,

but by the works that He has done, that we are saved. Saved. And I ask people, why should

I let you into heaven? It's amazing how many people answer that question. When God says, why should I let you into heaven at the last day, so many people, even good people, begin in the first person. I have believed, or I have repented, or I go to church, I give a tithe, I do my best to live the Christian life. That's never where assurance is found. What you do is always imperfect, even your repentance needs to be repented of, and even your faith is full of so much unbelief. No, we have assurance not beginning in the first person, I, but beginning in the third person. We always begin by saying He. He has regarded my helpless estate. He has shed His blood for my soul. He was delivered over because

of my transgressions. He was raised because of my justification. And if you begin with Christ,

you'll never have a reason to doubt. And when people say to me, if you died today and went before God, would he let you into heaven? And people say, I hope so. Even Christians, even members of this church will say to me, I hope so. When they say that, they're betraying, they have some doubt. And the only reason for doubt is when we look in and not out. We look down and not up. Don't look at yourself, look at Him. And you'll never have a reason to doubt. He does what His name says. He will save His people from their sins. But Christ is also our example.

He's our example in that He meets temptation in the power of the Spirit. Notice the first verse, and it's fore and aft. Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness. It's the Spirit. If Jesus Christ God's Son can't stand in his human nature without the help of the Holy Spirit, what hope do you and I have? In his human nature, Christ was like Samson. Samson was only strong when the Spirit was with him. And in his human nature, Christ never used his divine nature to make his human life easier. He was exhausted, he was crushed.

The omnipotent Son of God was crushed by the weight of the crossbeam of the cross going down the Via Dolorosa. Because he never used his divine nature as our end run around the frailty of his human nature. And in his human nature, Jesus Christ was as dependent upon the Holy Spirit for power as you are and as I am. And he met the devil in Christ. the spirit, and you must also walk by the spirit and you'll not fulfill the lust of the flesh. And you walk by the spirit as you have the word of the spirit

in your heart, and you call upon the spirit in your soul as you pray. And the answer Jesus did every temptation with an almighty, it is written. When Satan says, has God said? Jesus says, it is written. When Satan says to you, can you really be joyful today, after all that's happened? All the things God's taken from your life, all the things God's sent into your life, all the things God's withheld from you that you want? And you say, it is written, rejoice always. Again, I say rejoice. Can you really be thankful for this cancer, this providence, This unconverted child that God has yet to save, can you really be thankful? And you say, it is written, give thanks at all times for all things. Look at your life. Think of all

of the reasons you have to be frightened this morning. It is written, whenever I am afraid, I will trust in him. Think of all the things that have gone wrong. All of the things that could yet go wrong. Think it through, woman. Think it through, man. Think

of all the reasons you have to worry. Oh no, it is written, be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplications, make your requests known to God. And the peace of God that transcends all understanding will guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus. Look at your guilt. Think of how great your guilt

is. It is written in the Psalms, pardon my iniquity for your namesake for it is great. We don't know whether the greatness of the great is going back to God's name or back to my iniquity and the answer is both because the greatness of my iniquity is no argument because the greatness of God's name is always greater still. And God would never have given

me that prayer had he not meant me to use it and had he not meant to answer it. Pardon my iniquity for your namesake for it is great. Think of how guilt clings to

your soul, and shame. Oh, it is written, as far as the east is from the west, will I remove your transgressions from you. But you have provoked his anger so often. Yes, but his mercies are new every morning, and God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in love and kindness and truth. Look at how your sins control

you. You can't stop sinning. It is written, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Don't you feel abandoned? Do you feel abandoned because

God has abandoned you? No, it is written, I will never abandon you. I will never forsake you. Lo,

I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Answer the devil like that, and he will flee like the whipped cur that he is, in the Spirit and by the Word. That's how you fight the devil. It's the way Jesus did, and it's

the way all of the sons of God do. Let's pray together. Father, thank you for your mercies.

Thank you for these dear folk, oh God, and their patience to hear a long-winded Irishman bring the word of God at lunchtime.

Pray, Father, that you will cause that word to dwell richly in

all of our hearts. And if any are late for meetings
this afternoon, oh God, grant them grace and success despite
it. In Jesus' name, amen.