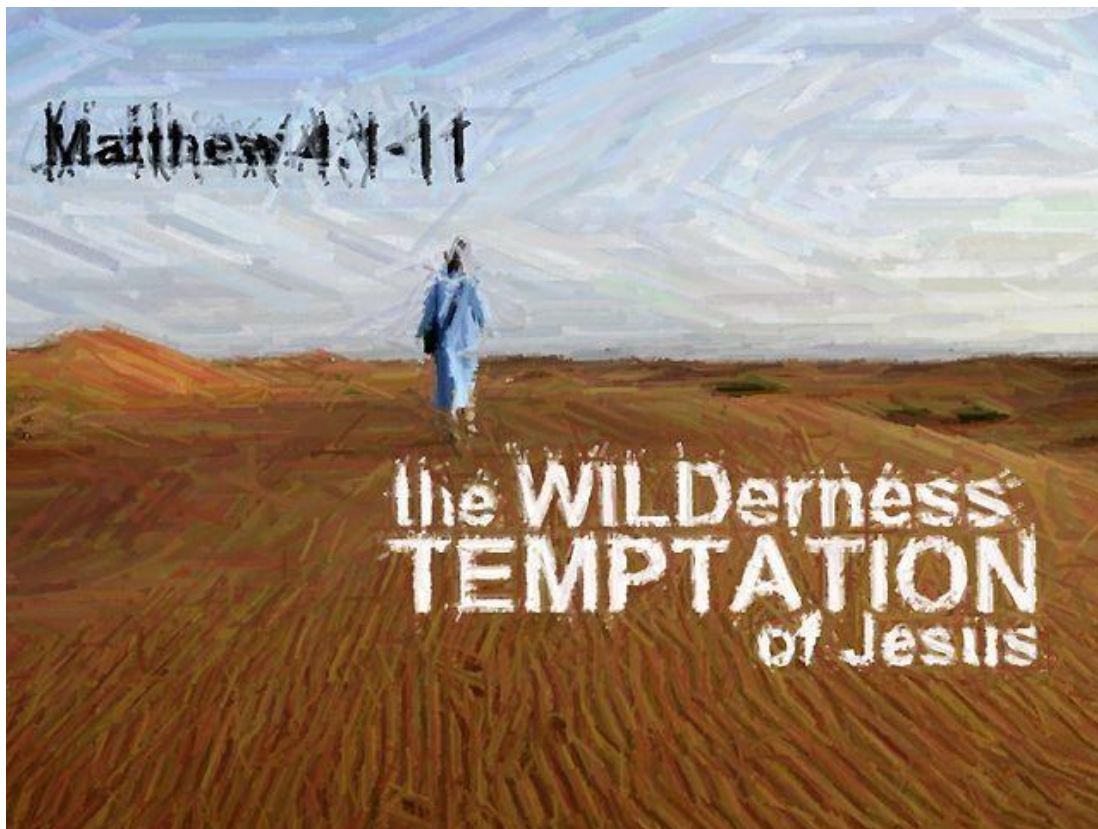


Minster Bethel Congregational Church (MBCC)

24/01/2021 -- In the Wilderness

Our Wilderness, Our Temptation



As we move into 2021 we are going to try and have fortnightly zoom
"Church & Chat"

This will be a short church reflection with a hymn, reading, (children's activity), prayer,
"thought for the week" and then a time to chat.

All lockdown services can be found at: www.mbccs.co.uk

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

Mark 10:45

Good morning and welcome to this week's thoughts.

Our hymn for today is "Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God"

[Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God - YouTube](#)

Seek ye first the kingdom of God
And His righteousness
And all these things
Shall be added unto you
Allelu alleluia

Man shall not live by bread alone
But by every word
That proceeds from the mouth of God
Allelu alleluia

Ask and it shall be given unto you
Seek and ye shall find
Knock and the door shall be
Opened unto you
Allelu alleluia

The reading today is Matthew 4: 1-11

[Matthew 4: 1-11 NIVUK - Jesus is tested in the wilderness - Bible Gateway](#)

Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness

¹ Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted^b by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'^b"

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

"He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'^b"

⁷ Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'^b"

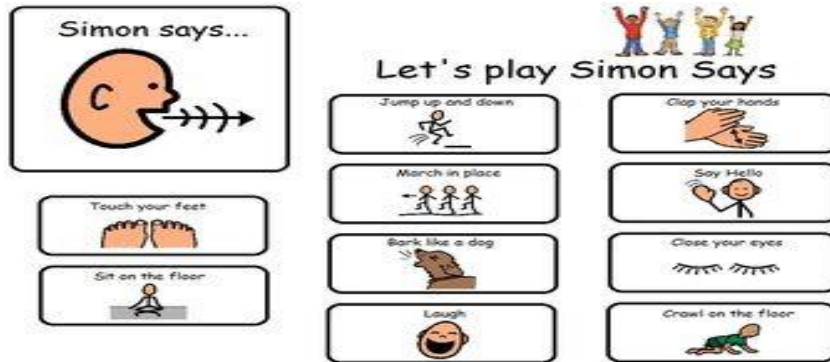
⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'^b"

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Matthew 4:1-11 NIV

Our Wilderness, Our Temptation



As we read this passage we focus on the temptations of Christ from Satan, but today we are going to think about 40 days in the wilderness as well as the temptations.

I think for the first time we can really start to understand this feeling. We have been in one form of isolation or restrictions on us for over 10 months. I know for those of you who live alone this is not only causing extreme loneliness but also impacting on your way of life and even those of us who do live with others feel cut off from family and friends. It is really a very strange time. The children missing friends and even missing being at school. So, we are in a really strong position to know what it was like for Jesus when he was led on his own into the wilderness.

However, Jesus was also really hungry as he had not eaten for 40 days, I really hope none of us have that experience! It was at this point after the forty days when Jesus must have been at his lowest that the Devil swoops in and starts playing his little or very BIG game of trying to tempt Jesus.

I was thinking about that game and likened it to the game "Simple Simon Says" hopefully you all remember that game. It is a game that works because we are clear about the rules. If Simon says you do it, if not you don't. In fact, the only reason any games work is because we all agree on the rules. In Simon Says we agree that one person will be able to tell the other people what to do. What if, instead of one person being the leader and giving instructions, we all started giving instructions? Like if you were saying, "Simon says sit," and I was saying "Simon Says stand," and someone else was saying "Simon says jump?" Would the game still work? Probably not, no.

That is what the devil was hoping for when tempting Jesus. Remember, Jesus is out in the desert and doesn't have any food or water, or a place to sleep, is tired probably a bit fed up and possibly a little disorientated at this time. It's just Jesus and the desert. The devil thinks that he can get Jesus to try to take control from his Father because Jesus is probably weak with hunger and thirst. The Devil is probably hoping that Jesus and God the Father will fight for control, which is kind of like God fighting with himself. Jesus won't do it, though. Jesus says that it is not his place to challenge God's power, or to tell God what to do. He tells the devil that God is in charge and that is how it should be. If Jesus can't tell God what to do, should we?

Here we are in 2021, in a lockdown, our own little wildernesses with many voices on TV and social media telling us what to do. Possibly a voice telling us it's OK just to.....

With all this happening around us how do we know what is right or wrong thing to do? We know that through God we are here to serve others and not to harm them and in doing so we serve God.

The answer is there in today's reading "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only."

Today's Pray:

Dear God,

Thank you for sending Jesus to show us how to live a perfect life


Thank you that He can help us when we are tempted

Help us to do the right thing

To love, serve, and obey you

Thank you for the love of Jesus

Amen.

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