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Ash Wednesday
March 1, 2017

Keeping a Reformed Lent: Christus Victor and Substitutionary Temptation

A few quick notes. First I misspoke when I said that after Matthew 4, the next time temptation appears in Matthew's gospel is chapter 26. Obviously, temptation is mentioned elsewhere in the gospel, but chapter 26 is the next time temptation is mentioned *specifically in reference to Jesus*, which was my point. And the temptation is the same as in chapter 4: to escape the cross.

The sermon pivoted on 2 key issues:

1. Jesus is presented as a new Adam, Israel, and David. Yes, there are OT connections that can be made, but these are the main ones. He takes on these three identities, and these three identities explain what he's doing. As a new Adam, he resists Satan so he can fulfill the original Adamic mandate of multiplying and filling the earth, ruling over it and subduing it. He reverses Adam's curse and replaces it with blessing by operating under the conditions of the curse and bearing its consequences. As a new Israel, he relives Israel's history and thus rewrites Israel's story. See Peter Leithart's essay "The Typological Structure of Matthew's Gospel" to see how he does this, playing the role of both Israel and Israel's God. Matthew's gospel tracks with Israel's OT history from Genesis to 2 Chronicles (the last book in the Jewish version of the canon). As a new David, he brings in the kingdom by defeating the Satanic foe (note that Goliath as described in serpentine categories/imagery in 1 Sam. 17 and dies via a head wound). As New David, he remains faithful to his bride, laying down his life for her rather than seizing her selfishly, as David did Bathsheba. Jesus is true king and husband, the true shepherd and warrior.

2. Everything Satan tempts Jesus to do for himself, he will do – *but for others*. He will do the very things Satan tempts him to do, but he will do them the right way rather than the wrong way, and for the sake of others rather than for his his own sake. That is to say, he will do them in the Son-of-God way rather than the son-of-Satan way. He will do them through the cross rather than apart from it. He does make bread, but instead of making bread for himself he makes himself into bread for others. He will come out from under the Father's wing of protection, but not in order to draw human praise to himself. Rather, as he does so (at the cross), he is scorned and reviled by men. But by coming out from the Father's wing, he makes room for us under the Father's wing. Finally, Jesus very much wants the nations and kingdoms of the world. But if he takes as a gift from Satan, the nations will be doomed to darkness and death forever; there will be no salvation or forgiveness for the nations and the reign of the devil will go on forever. Instead of taking the nations as a gift from Satan, he receives them as a reward, having purchased them with the precious cost of his own blood. Thus, he does claim the nations as his own in the end (and he does so on another mountain in Mt. 28 when he issues the Great Commission), but

he claims the nations in such a way that they will come to share in his salvation and glory. Instead of taking the nations, he saves the nations; instead of receiving the nations as a free gift from Satan, he purchases the nations with his own life; instead of receiving the nations without price, he pays the greatest price of all to possess them.

Perhaps in the sermon I stressed too strongly Jesus as Savior over Jesus as Exemplar, though I did this precisely because Lent has often been abused by reversing this emphasis. Obviously, Jesus as Savior and Jesus as Example go together. But the former is the foundation of the latter. We do seek to imitate Jesus, but we do so in faith, trusting and resting in all he is and all he has done for us. What binds these together? Union with Christ, of course. Because we are united to him, all he did on our behalf counts for us and because we are united to him we grow in likeness to him.

As a new Adam, Jesus resists Satan's temptation, particularly in a food test (since food was the original testing point).

As a new Israel, he quotes Deuteronomy again and again, which was the sermon Moses preached to Israel in the wilderness.

Note that Satan's temptations always sound so reasonable. Sin, after all, really is fun and enjoyable for a time. But in the end, sin over-promises and under-delivers. Thus, we have to cling to the Word of God. When we do so, Satan must flee. The issue in every temptation is always the same: whose word will rule your life? Satan's words sound reasonable, but they actually slander God. He appeals to our needs, often very legitimate needs (our need to eat, to have sex, to have clothing and possessions, etc.) but we have to recognize if going without what we need (or think we need) is required by God, then we have to learn to go without. Satan says, "If you are a child of God, surely you should x, y, and z." But if God is not providing x, y, and z according to his Word, then Satan is wrong – we actually prove we are sons and live as sons by going without them. Nothing is so vital that we should be willing to disobey God to have it. Obey God. Be a true son. Be true to the demands of your baptism. Worship and serve God alone, and the victory will be yours. Obedience hurts (it's hard!) but it never hurts you; it's actually good for you, however painful. Sin is easy and fun but actually hurts you and destroys you in the long run.

Man does not live by bread alone – or by kale alone, or by meat alone, etc. Food does not keep us alive. Everything we eat is dead. God's Word sustains us and nourishes us. The point of "man does not live by bread alone" is not simply that man needs spiritual nourishment alongside physical nourishment; the point is there is nothing automatic about our physical nourishment. Virtually everything we eat is dead. It has been "sacrificed" for our life. But it is the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who makes food "work," who makes it nourishing for us.

In the second temptation, Jesus appeals to Deut 6, which recalls the incident at Massah in Ex. 17. The people wanted water. Moses struck the rock – actually, The Rock, the Lord himself – and water flowed (cf. 1 Cor. 10, where Paul identifies the rock as Christ). God provides for us and forgives us through being struck on our behalf. When Jesus was struck on the cross, water and blood flowed out of his side. It would be arrogance to test the Father’s love. He does not need to prove his love for us because he has already done so again and again. True sons do not need to put their father’s love to the test because they already know they have it.

The third temptation reveals that politics is all about who you worship. Whose word will you reverence in the public square? Whose word is law? The word you obey in the public square reveals your true god. In our culture today most people only obey their own feelings – feelings are the new authority, the new god. To challenge feelings, even in the name of facts, is blasphemy. Jesus quotes Deut. 10, and the wider context is crucial to note:

12 “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, **13** *and* to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good? **14** Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, *also* the earth with all that *is* in it. **15** The Lord delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as *it is* this day. **16** Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer. **17** For the Lord your God *is* God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. **18** He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. **19** Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. **20** You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name. **21** He *is* your praise, and He *is* your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen. **22** Your fathers went down to Egypt with seventy persons, and now the Lord your God has made you as the stars of heaven in multitude.

Jesus explains how we can become truly great in Mark 10. It is not by serving Satan but by serving our neighbors. It is not by grasping for glory, but by pouring ourselves out in humble service.

Note that Jesus’ rebuke of Satan is matched by his rebuke of Peter in Matthew 16, He says to Peter, “Get behind me Satan.” The common link, of course, is that both Satan and Peter sought glory without a cross.

What are the chances the mountain Satan takes Jesus to in the final temptation is the same mountain Jesus and the disciples meet on in Matthew 28? There, looking down on the kingdoms of the earth, Jesus says he will now have them, and he commissions his followers to go make the nations his disciples. That is to say, he will make the

kingdoms of the world his own kingdom. He will take what Satan offered – but he will do so through the cross, rather than apart from it. All authority is his. In issuing the Great Commission, he is trusting and claiming the Father's promise to him in Psalm 2.

Again, everything Satan offers Jesus is something he will eventually have. He will eat – indeed, he will become known as a glutton and a drunkard. He will be rescued by his Father – not merely from a leap off the temple from the pit of the grave, from sheol. He will have the nations as his possession and will rule over them, but not as a greedy self-serving satanic king, but as a loving redeemer king. The same issues confront us. Most of the things Satan tempts us with are things we can have if we will wait for them and do the right thing. He tempts us with good things, but tests whether or not we will patiently wait and trust. Satan tempts with sexual pleasure NOW!! Will you wait for marriage to enjoy the pleasures of sex, or will you demand them right now? Will you wait to be able to afford that new furniture or will you have it now by cheating on those business accounts so you can pad your wallet? Will you glorify yourself by bragging and boasting and making yourself the center of attention or will you leave your popularity in God's hands and wait patiently for God and others to exalt you? In short: Will you live like Satan (and Adam and Israel) or like Jesus? Whose side are you on? Whose word do you follow?