

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
February 14, 2016

Victory In Jesus

Luke 4:1-13

4:1 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness
4:2 for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.
4:3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."
4:4 And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"
4:5 And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time,
4:6 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.
4:7 If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."
4:8 And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'"
4:9 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,
4:10 for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,'
4:11 and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"
4:12 And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"
4:13 And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

1. Forty Years in Wilderness

The forty days of Lent originally comes from the forty days of wilderness that Lord Jesus spent. In addition, the forty days of

wilderness is closely related to the forty years of wilderness that Israelites spent after leaving Egypt.

God saved Israelites suffered in Egypt, through various miracles; however, He didn't lead them to the land of Canaan immediately after Egypt. He, in fact, took Israelites to Sinai Peninsula in the opposite direction. There were a few reasons for this.

The first reason was to protect the people. If Israelites straightly went to Canaan, the border army of Egypt might have destroyed them sooner or later. Otherwise, still, Israelites would have been involved in the conflicts against the earlier inhabitants at once. The people of Israel had many of women and children, and men weren't organized at all; this is why God led them to Sinai instead of Canaan in order to protect them after the Exodus.

Next reason was to prepare the place without any bothering for worship. Moses said to Pharaoh, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God" and this was not the excuse for escape. God truly wanted Israelites to worship Him in the wilderness. Pharaoh said back to Moses, "Go, sacrifice to your God within the land." But Moses answered, "It would not be right to do so, for the offerings we shall sacrifice to the LORD our God are an abomination to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice offerings abominable to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us? We must go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as he tells us." The first thing God ordered the people after the Exodus was to build the Holy Temple, to appoint the priests, and to worship Him every Sabbath. Then, the people met with God,

witnessed His glory, and offered unhampered worship to Him in the wilderness.

The final reason was to let the people of Israel learn the trust in God and make them actual as the people of God. Surely there were not any attacks neither from the army of Egypt nor other inhabitants, but they didn't have river or fields either. Therefore, they had to believe that God would provide their needs while their journey of wilderness. As you see, God guided Israel to the wilderness to let them rely on Him. They were the slaves in Egypt, but became the people of God by His redemption. God gave them the Ten Commandments and said, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." God recognized them as His people, and they recognized the LORD as their God. However, that was not enough to be the actual people of God, even though they were named as the people of God. They needed to actually trust in God, experience His works, and glorify His grace; consequently, God wanted them to be the true people of God, and then let Israel learn how to trust in God while they were in the wilderness.

2. Failures of Israelites

However, Israelites made a variety of failures for God's challenges.

First of all, the food. God gave water gushed out from a rock and breads from the heaven. Recently, scholars researched the wilderness where Israelites walked and found that there are ground water veins under the rout. God had provided their necessities wherever they went in order to prevent their thirst or hunger. They couldn't see the

underground water veins; however, they reached wherever Israelites went. Also, they couldn't see the heaven; however, the breads that nurture the people came from the heaven. Faith is, even you can not see it, you believe in God providing all the necessities and rely on Him. However, the people judge only what they can see and complained, "No drinking water!" "No breads!" "There are no graves in Egypt so God let us die here!" They did not believe what God has provided for them invisibly.

Secondly, the guidance of God. God always gives us the best thing at the best time. However, we sometimes don't follow God's plan and follow what we want instead. We try to accomplish what we want by our own effort at our own timing. Some people can't wait for God and fail. Other people do not carry on what God prepares for them and don't follow God's guidance. Israelites were the same in the wilderness. Israelites were complaining "I want to eat a meat" "I want to drink water" and did not asked them to God, in fact, they demanded God to do what they want. The scripture describes, if you demand God to do what you like, this is "testing God". In reality, God puts us to the test. However, we put God to the test, and it should not be happening. Israelites, because of their greedy desire, they put God to the test and did not follow God's leading. According to Psalm 106:14, "But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness, and put God to the test in the desert."

Thirdly, the worship to God. While Moses climbed the mountain of Sinai to receive the words of God, people made the golden calf, offered as sacrifice, and worship it as a substitution of God. Israelites who are supposed to be people of God, true worshipers of true God,

committed an idol worship already. When they started to worship the idol, everything went wrong. The scripture says to describe this situation, “And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” (Exodus 32:6) For the idol worship, it always comes with drinking, singing, horseplay, nasty play, indecent, and violence. People committed a failure in the most important part, which is the worship, and the morality disorder occurred there.

3. Victory of Jesus

The temptation that Jesus received was the same as that of Israelites in the desert. The devil said “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” This is the same kind of temptation that Israelites were tempted in the desert. People forgot that God gave life and supported man, nor did they trust God. However, Jesus answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’” and He trusted God who keeps man alive.

Next, the devil took Jesus 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.” This is similar to the Israelites who test God numerous times. People tried to use God’s power as they wanted. But Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” And He refused to use God’s power to attract people. Jesus followed God’s plan and guidance.

The devil next showed all the kingdoms of the world to Jesus and said, “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.” This is because the devil tried to

make Jesus worship something other than God. If people turn away from worshipping to the true God, then they will end up worshipping money and pleasure in this world. Jesus refused this temptation by saying, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’” and Jesus lived as a God’s servant.

Jesus defeated all the temptations. Many people would say, “Of course Jesus defeated all the temptations because he is the Son of God.” However, Jesus defeated temptations not only by using his power as the Son of God, but he also won as a human. The devil said to Jesus, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here.” but Jesus did not turn stone to bread using his superpower as the Son of God. The devil, instead, used superpower to take Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple. Similarly, Jesus did not defeat temptations by using his “super” knowledge and wisdom. Instead, He used common knowledge of the Bible which small children would know and defeated temptations. Jesus won the victory as a believer who believed in God and trusted His words, and his victory recovered mistakes of God’s people who could not trust God when they were tempted in the desert. This is such a big encouragement to us because we, too, can defeat temptations by trusting Jesus Christ and see the victory of our faith at the time of trials.

Many people tend to forget God and not trust Him when they have a good job, good family and something special that they can feel good about. But when we face trials and feel as if we are in the middle of desert without any help, we begin to realize that God makes us alive. We begin to understand how important it is to believe God, trust Him, and obey Him. When we go out into the desert within our heart to

meet God, we finally face ourselves. We realize that we collapse when God put us in a trial and we find ourselves easily give in to temptations. It is far away from the situation where we strengthen our faith with trials, but we realize how fragile we are when tempted. We realize how miserable we are without faith. But we hear the voice of Lord Jesus talking to us saying, “I defeated temptations. Trust me and I will give you my victory, through which you will win a victory, too. 1 John 5:5 says, “Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” Let’s believe in Lord Jesus and trust Him and obey Him. This road of faith, trust and obedience is the road to victory.

(Prayer)

Dear Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus had temptations in the desert but the Lord had already met you and confirmed His trust and obedience to you. That is why the Lord had defeated temptations and showed the power of trust through trials. Please give us the time to face you one-on-one and let us receive the victory of Lord Jesus. We pray through the name of Lord Jesus who can lead our faith to victory, Amen.