

Jesus proves to be God's faithful Son
January 15, 2012 - Matthew 4:1-11

Who do you trust? Well, it depends on what kind of trust we're talking about.

There's the general kind of every day trust. We place this trust in people we hardly know. When we're going through a green light, we rely on other drivers to stop at their red light. When we're sick and go to the hospital or our doctor, we trust them to read the results carefully and provide us with an accurate diagnosis.

There's relational trust that we place in people we meet through school or at work or in the neighborhood. We rely on them to tell the truth or fulfill an expectation. We trust business partners to come through on their end of the contract. We trust group members to do their part on the project.

Then there is the much deeper trust of our feelings and faithfulness and foundation of our lives. We trust our spouse to be faithful. We trust our family members to tell the truth. Children trust their parents to provide for love and care for them until they can care for themselves. We trust our friends to show up when we arrange to meet. We trust a baby sitter to take special care with our kids.

There is the trust of our physical lives. Sometimes, we have to entrust our lives into the hands of others. It may be a paramedic in our home, a surgeon on the operating table, a pilot of a plane or a bus driver weaving his way through a dangerous road.

But perhaps the ultimate trust is that of our entire lives – the length of our lives; our future; our destiny and our soul. Who or what do you trust with your entire life? Who do you trust who can see you through every day and year until the end of your life on Earth? Yourself? Your family? Your soul mate? Your resources? Your retirement plan?

What about Jesus? Think about your life right now. What's going well? What's troubling you? Now, think about your level of trust in Jesus to see you through whatever troubles you today. How would you rate your trust level in Jesus on a scale of 0-10?

Trust is confidence in and reliance on good qualities in others especially fairness, truth, honor and ability. It's great when we find someone we can trust. But sometimes our trust is broken. It fractures relationships and requires healing. Broken trust can even impact our relationships with others who have never broken our trust. We may project our trust issues with one person on to others. Who do you trust? What trust issues do you have?

Jewish people in the first century had a trust issue. God promised them that He would one day send a deliverer; someone who could release them from oppression, poverty, humiliation and shame. When the Romans conquered the area of Israel around 63 BC, their need for a deliverer intensified. Remember before Christmas we talked about the time of the Maccabees and how the Jews tasted freedom for 100 years? Well now that was gone. The people cried out for the deliverer. Many claimed that role. They tried to rouse up the people to revolt against the Romans. They claimed to be the Christ – the one who would restore Israel to days of glory like in the time of David. But one after another, they failed. They were captured. They were killed along with their closest advisors. Still more came and bombarded the people with claims of Messiah. Who would they follow? For it was a matter of life and death. If the Romans found out you proclaimed anyone but Caesar as king, you were in trouble. Who was worthy of their trust?

The Gospel writer Matthew knew this. He wrote to prove to Jews that Jesus was in fact the true Messiah. Matthew displays how Jesus fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies. From these proofs, Matthew makes the case that Jesus was worthy to receive their and our ultimate trust. We're going to see the trustworthiness of Jesus by revisiting the passage you looked at last week about Jesus' temptation. Here we will see how Jesus proves to be God's faithful son. Matthew's account can still strengthen our trust in Jesus if we will hear what He has to say. Wherever your trust meter is at in Jesus, I pray it will be stronger by the time we're done. .

Deuteronomy 8:1-10 ESV

[8:1] "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. [2] And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. [3] And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. [4] Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. [5] Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you. [6] So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. [7] For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, [8] a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, [9] a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. [10] And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

Matthew 3:13-4:11 ESV

[13] Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. [14] John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" [15] But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. [16] And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; [17] and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

[4:1] Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. [2] And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. [3] And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." [4] But he answered, "It is written,

"Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

[5] Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple [6] and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

"He will command his angels concerning you,'
and

"On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone."

[7] Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" [8] Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. [9] And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." [10] Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

"You shall worship the Lord your God
and him only shall you serve."

[11] Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Jesus proves to be God's faithful Son. **But why was it important to prove Jesus' was God's faithful Son? Why**

was it important to be God's faithful Son? In the Old Testament, God called Israel His Son. Hosea 11:1 states "When

Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." God rescued His people and called them to be His

faithful son. **But Israel failed miserably as God's Son and Servant. They doubted and tested and disobeyed and**

grumbled. So who could claim to be the faithful Son of God? This episode dramatically portrays Jesus to fulfill that role.

How did Jesus prove to be God's Faithful Son?

He used God's Word to resist the devil's temptations and continue on God's path.

Jesus has just been baptized. The Spirit of God descended upon Him like a dove. A voice from heaven is heard declaring "this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased." It is God the Father speaking. It sounds a little like Hosea 11:1. Then the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. So this was no accident. It wasn't like Jesus went into the wilderness for some alone time and then the devil showed up surprising Him. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness for this purpose.

A Jew reading those words 'into the wilderness' would remember the significance of the wilderness in their nation's history. God led Israel out of Egypt into the wilderness. There He gave her His law and covenant. There He tested her. There she collectively failed when the tests came. Yet the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness face the tests and to be tempted by the devil.

How can this be a good thing? Temptation is always bad isn't it? Yet this is God's initiative. God doesn't tempt.

But He does test. God tests to strengthen His Son and His children. The devil tempts to weaken and destroy people. In the mysterious and wondrous ways of God, He accomplishes His purposes in testing through the devil's tempting. Here, the newly revealed relationship of Jesus with His Father is about to undergo this test.

But Matthew adds one more detail before he gets into the temptation. Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights. The number forty would immediately bring to the Jewish mind Israel's forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Moses also spent 40 days on the mountain with God without food. Moses was sustained by God. Jesus spends these 40 days and nights fasting. Yet, he is hungry.

The tempter arrives and declares there is no need for the Son of God to be hungry. "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." Now scholars debate the essence of this temptation. One perspective suggests the devil invites Jesus to use His messianic powers for personal gain. So it's a temptation to abuse power. Another possibility is that the devil tempts Jesus to depend solely on His own resources to satisfy His hunger. So in some way this would be a rejection of His Father. It may have been a subtle invitation to break the fast before God wanted it to happen in an act of self-reliance. **Temptation #1 – Stop trusting God to provide. Instead trust yourself.**

When we consider how Israel, God's beloved son responded to Him in the desert, it looks quite familiar. Exodus 16:1-4 - [16:1] They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. [2] And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, [3] and the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

[4] Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not.

So the people were hungry and didn't trust God to provide. They grumbled and later we discover they even wanted to go back to Egypt. "They didn't have the resources to turn stones into bread. But they figured they could go back to Egypt. So instead of continuing to depend on God for sustenance, they want to independently turn to their own resources. Satan tempts Jesus to act the same way. But the Son of God will not act like Israel, the unfaithful son.

Response 1 – Man does not live on bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

(Matthew 4:4) Jesus uses a phrase from the Deuteronomy passage we read earlier. Ultimately, our sustenance comes from God Himself and by His Word we continue to live. Yes, bread sustains us physically. But if we did not have God's word or permission to continue to live, bread could not provide for us or sustain us. Israel only survived in the desert because of God's Word. Not just God's manna. God's word; God's protection; God's provision that their clothes would not wear out.

We live today only because of God's Word. God has given His permission that we live today. If God withdrew His Word, our lives would be over immediately. We live and are sustained by much more than bread. Even over this time of grief in our family, there are times we didn't feel much like eating physical food. But spiritual food brought life. His Word brings hope and perspective and moving forward. Jesus would not break with His Father over mere bread because He knew that His Father had the ability to sustain Him whether or not there was bread. He resists the first temptation.

So the devil tries a different approach. He takes Jesus to Jerusalem. He places Jesus on some high point of the temple. Whether it's the temple roof or the highest point of the temple grounds over the Kidron Valley, we're not sure. Then he says, "If you're the Son of God, throw yourself down." But the devil doesn't stop there. He quotes Scripture. Psalm 91:11-12 to be exact. "He will command His angels. They'll come through to catch you."

Now for a Jew who knew a bit of Scripture, this temptation would make some sense. In the last prophet of the Old Testament – Malachi 3:1 we read "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple." Wouldn't this be a perfect way for Jesus to begin His ministry? He could jump off the temple roof and angels could catch him maybe in the sight of thousands of people. Who wouldn't follow a Messiah who floated down before them? Think about the marketing opportunities and the longevity of a story like that. Maybe it's not such a bad idea.

There's only one problem. It puts God to the test. Will God come through? Would God actually send angels to catch Jesus? Well what's wrong with putting God to the test? It reveals a deep lack of trust in God. We might test other humans because their trustworthiness is in question. But God has never failed a trust. He has never broken a promise.

He has never sinned; never broken His Word. So to think that testing God is the right thing to do reveals an immense lack of trust in God. **Temptation #2 – To keep up your faith, test God every once in a while to see if He comes through.**

That’s exactly what the Israelites did in the wilderness. They didn’t trust God in what became an infamous incident called Massah. They asked does God really provide? Will He come through?

Exodus 17:1-7 –

[17:1] All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. [2] Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?” [3] But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” [4] So Moses cried to the LORD, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” [5] And the LORD said to Moses, “Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. [6] Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.” And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. [7] And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

You might have heard the expression “I’m laying out a fleece to see what happens.” Those of you who were with us in our journey through the book of Judges know where that expression comes from. Remember Gideon’s fleece? He didn’t know if he could trust the Lord and His promises. So Gideon laid out a fleece or skin of sheep with wool on it. One night he prayed that if the ground was wet the fleece should remain dry. If that happened, he would trust the Lord. The Lord mercifully condescended and accommodated Gideon’s request. But that still wasn’t enough. So Gideon asked that the ground be dry and the fleece wet the next morning. The Lord again obliged this request. But this was not because Gideon displayed such great faith. This was not a sign of faith! It is not a model to be followed. It was a sign of lack of faith and incredible arrogance – presuming to test God. Yet God mercifully condescended to Gideon’s level to strengthen his faith.

Jesus will have nothing to do with Satan's game. **Response #2 – You shall not put the Lord your God to the test. (Matthew 4:7)** Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 6 where Moses remembers the terrible incident at Massah. It is wrong to test God. Yes we must trust Him and ask of Him in prayer. But we submit them all to His will. We don't give Him ultimatums that He'd better deliver on. If we think that's the way to relate to God, we don't know Him or understand who we are compared to Him. It also can indicate that we have no intention of going along difficult paths God has called us to travel.

When you really think about it, testing God is the easy way out of a difficult path. In a sense, it would have been way easier for Jesus to jump. He would have floated down among the crowds on the temple. Who wouldn't acclaim Him as Messiah then? There would be no need for a cross and all this suffering stuff.

But He refused to test God or try to short circuit His plans. In the end, angels did come and "catch" him when a few verses later they came to minister to Him. They caught him again in the Garden before His arrest when they ministered to him. But Jesus never tested His Father. He never threatened that relationship.

So the devil tries one last time. He abandons subtlety and deceit and goes for a full frontal attack. **Temptation #3 – You can have what you want now, if you will only worship me.** The devil likely presents a vision to Jesus of some sort. We don't know of a mountain where you can see all the kingdoms of the world. Although it might simply be a high mountain from which you could see many places. Regardless, the devil lays out a critical test of Jesus' loyalty to His Father. You can have what you see now, if only you will worship me.

That's what Israel did again and again, abandoned God so they could have what they wanted immediately. It started while Moses was up on Mount Sinai receiving the 10 commandments from God. The people assumed he was dead. They could not endure worshipping a god they couldn't see. They remembered their time in Egypt and the many statues and carvings of the gods they saw there.

Exodus 32:1-6 - When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." [2] So Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." [3] So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. [4] And he received the gold

from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" [5] When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD." [6] And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

Israel did this after Moses was on the mountain for 40 days in Exodus 32. Despite having seen the plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea and hearing God's voice from the mountain, they craved another god. They craved the assurance of something visible. So they fashioned a golden calf and worshipped it. Israel repeated this breach of trust again and again turning to other gods for immediate gain but long term loss.

Satan invites Jesus to stop worshipping His Father and take the short cut to gain all the kingdoms of the world. Violate the first commandment, and it will all be yours. This invitation to idolatry, which is to give our worship to anyone or anything else but God, still tempts us today. I'm not only talking about Sunday morning corporate worship. I'm talking about who or what we worship in the depths of our hearts. Who or what do we cherish above anything else? Who or what do we go to for comfort when we're alone? Sitting at the graveside of your mother and father exposes the frailty and uselessness of so many idols that clamor for our attention today.

Jesus would not be distracted by even this lofty invitation. In fact, now He takes charge and commands.

Response #3 - "Be gone Satan! You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve." He's not commanding Satan to worship God. He quotes Deuteronomy 6 again which is a form of the first commandment – You shall have no other gods before me." But He does command Satan to leave demonstrating the true Lord in this situation.

So Jesus passes where Israel failed. Israel despised the bread and the one who provided it thinking they could go back to Egypt to find life. Jesus recognized that man lives by the Word of God. Israel tested the Lord at Massah. Jesus refused to test the Lord by throwing Himself off of the temple. Israel worshipped the golden calf. Jesus refused to worship Satan.

So Jesus proves to be God's faithful Son. He will not look for a short cut on God's plans or will. He will not take the easy way out.

So remember our question that we began with today? How would you rate your trust in Jesus on a scale of 1-10?

We serve a Lord who did not use His power for personal gain or take advantage of His position. He refused to force God's hand or test God. He refused to take a short cut on God's path. If He would have done that, it would have meant death for us to any relationship with God - Sovereign Lord. He is Faithful. He is Trustworthy. He does not make mistakes. He remains true. He cannot be bought. **So entrust yourself, your situation and your troubles to Him more than you did before this service began.** Entrust whatever you're facing to His care. Bring it to Him. Plead for His intervention.

Man does not live by bread alone. Maybe you've been trying to live by bread alone for a long time. Maybe you've been pursuing bread as your ultimate goal in life. Maybe you've even obtained or accumulated a lot of things and think that you've found the abundance of life. Yet living only for shopping or vacations or a bigger house or more money ultimately comes up empty. Or maybe you think that doing enough good things in your life will even your place before God. It will earn you acceptance by God and gain you entry into His eternal kingdom.

But life with God is not sustained by actual bread or money or good works. Our lives are sustained by God's Word. In His Word He states – All have sinned and fall short of giving God glory all the time. The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. This is eternal life – that we know the Father, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he sent.

So today, Jesus invites you to put your trust in Him as your Savior and Lord. Jesus calls you to repent or turn from clinging to your sins or something that you idolize above Him and turn to Him. When you put your faith in this Lord who proved to be Gods' Faithful Son, God will save you. You will receive His Gospel and have your sins forgiven and enter into eternal life now as you begin the journey of knowing God and His Son. Will you turn from sin and to Him today?

Another way to strengthen your trust in **Read the Faithful Son's Word and live from it.** We are not reading the Bible through in 2012 to check off boxes on a chart. We are reading to know the God who gives us life. We do not live by bread alone but by His every word. How will you live if you don't know His Word. If you have not joined us in this journey yet, start now. Pick up one of the reading plans at the info center and join us in week three. I am going to blog

on what I read. You can find different posts on the passages we've already read to encourage us to keep going. But Read or Listen to God's Word and then live from it.

Resist Temptation with the Word and Spirit. Jesus resisted the devil's temptation by quoting God's Word. But He also had the power of the Holy Spirit upon Him. We resist the same way. We learn God's Word. We speak it when temptations come. And we ask the Holy Spirit for His power to resist. So don't view the Reading the Bible as some reading assignment that you have to get over with to pass the course. Read it to gain skill with the primary tool God has provided for us to resist the devil.

Who can you trust? Hopefully some people. But certainly Jesus.