
For Us Fights the Valiant One (Matthew 4:1-11)
3/5/2017 Sermon by Pastor Jason Liebenow



World War 2 shook the world as people knew it. It changed lives. It changed entire nations. As the Axis Powers rapidly conquered the Allied forces early on, things looked pretty bleak, until the turning point came, when the all the Allied nations truly united in their efforts against their enemies.

Here was one great lesson that war taught us, a lesson that the world has been echoing since the beginning of time: good allies brings great power. Most of us have heard this lesson over and over. There's strength in numbers. A chord of three strands is not easily broken. There's value in seeking advice from other people and not just doing your own thing.

Today, as we consider our battle, not against enemy nations, not against bad judgment, but our battle against Satan himself, we find that knowing our ally is not just *an* important part of the fight, it is *the only* important part of the fight. In our battle against Satan, we find that we are totally powerless. We need not just an ally, but a champion. Today, as we consider Jesus' temptation in the desert from Matthew 4, we will watch in awe as the Valiant One Fights For Us.

A famous movie once stated, "The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist." How do people think about Satan today? In our scientific age, many people will consider any talk of demons to be nonsense, and yet people seem to have this childish fascination with demons in horror movies or playing with things like Ouiji boards. People don't take demonic powers seriously, because many people deep down, don't believe in Satan.

The fact of the matter is, Satan wants our world to not believe in him, because then if there is no Satan, then there's probably no God either. Satan wants people to think there's no supernatural at all, and you see how he uses that belief to run rampant in our society. If there's no heaven or hell, why shouldn't I selfishly pursue all that *I* want in life? If this is all there is, I better live it up! If there's no Satan, than what is wrong with being just a little naughty.

We are not immune to Satan's lies either. Even for those of us who have been Christians all our lives, think of all the times something God says shocks us, or makes us uncomfortable. The very fact that our thinking is so different from God's way of thinking shows that we are operating on the basis of Satan's lies rather than on God's truth.

Satan so easily tempts us to distrust our God. We think, "God helps those who help themselves," "If I don't take care of myself, no one will," "I've gotta look out for

number 1.” But all such thoughts go against what God’s Word says.

Satan so easily tempts us to put God to the test. We hear that God works all things for the good of those who love him, and then we ignore the responsibility God calls us to in our lives with the thought, “Well, God will work it out.” We ignore our need to take care of our physical bodies with the thought, “Well, when God decides it’s my time, it’ll be my time,” and so we ignore the fact that God calls us to take care of our bodies as he considers our bodies to be his own temple! We even fail to grow in our faith with the thought, “Well, I’m saved by grace, so I don’t have to do anything. Why hear God speak if I already know I’m good with God? Why repent of my sins and kick them out of my life if I already know I’m forgiven?” And so we ignore God’s clear words to deal with sin in our lives in the most serious ways.

Satan so easily tempts us to think sin can get us what we want. Satan tempts us to indulge in our sinful desires and to call it, “healthy.” He bombards our society with examples of greedy, immoral, selfish people and makes us believe that they are balanced, wise, charismatic role models.

And we fall for it, without even recognizing the temptation. Martin Luther once pictured it this way: If we knew how many arrows Satan has pointed at us at any one time, we would be desperate to hear God’s Word, were would be memorizing the Word, doing the most drastic things to get rid of any sin we caught ourselves in. But how often do we treat our very relationship with the Almighty or our sins against him as if they were no big deal?

The honest picture of our battle against Satan is not the World War 2 picture of Great Britain heroically holding on against the German blitz until reinforcements come. We have no battle against Satan. We already lie slain on the battlefield. We are lead away captive. We sit in cells as prisoners of war. Even more accurate still, we stand as brainwashed soldiers fighting on Satan’s side. We have lost, and desperately so.

But For Us Fights the Valiant One. There is one whom Satan has not defeated. As powerless as we are before Satan, so powerless is Satan before him. Our champion has appeared and Satan does not stand a chance. His name is Jesus Christ.

He has destroyed Satan forever, never once falling for any of Satan’s temptations and lies. But Satan actually thought he could get our champion to fall! Foolish as we are, Satan proves even more foolish in bringing the fight against Jesus.

In Matthew 4, we hear that Satan finds Jesus after he has spent 40 days and nights in the desert without food. God had sustained him for all that time, but now

Jesus is hungry. Satan thought he could get Jesus to distrust God just like he does so easily to us. He goes to Jesus and says, "You're the Son of God! You shouldn't have to be hungry! Just use your power to help yourself. Who else is going to take care of you, after all? God's let you get this hungry, hasn't he? Why don't you just help yourself out and turn these stones into bread?"

But our champion was not even phased. He parried Satan's attack and struck right back using God's very Word. Jesus had trusted his heavenly Father to sustain him through those 40 days and nights and he would continue trusting his Father's plan. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Jesus would trust God over Satan and his lies.

Satan thought he could get Jesus to test God like he so easily does to us. Satan countered Jesus' words, "You know God's Word, do you? So do I. Look, God says he will protect you! If you are so faithful to God, show how much you trust him! Throw yourself off of the temple and prove that you trust him to take care of you!"

But Jesus knew Satan's trick. God had promised to protect his people, but God has not given us a license to live sinful and reckless lives with the assumption that God will simply clean up the messes we make. Instead God tells us that a man reaps what he sows. Jesus knew God would protect him, and Jesus would faithfully carry out his mission, without testing God. Jesus again quoted from Deuteronomy, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

Satan thought he could get Jesus to try to reach his goal through sin like he so easily does to us.. He attacked Jesus again, "We know how this ends, Jesus. It ends with you on the throne. But do you really have to go through all the suffering and death? You've already lived 30 long years on this world of sinful people. You've gotta be sick of it, right? Do you really want to spend more years here? You've only just begun your ministry and already your Father makes you spend 40 days alone in the wilderness with nothing to eat? It's only going to get worse from here on. People are going to reject you, misunderstand you, humiliate you, torture you, and kill you. Is it really worth it? I tell you what, I can give you the power and the throne you're aiming for, and I can do it in a much quicker and easier way. Just worship me and you'll have it."

But Jesus again never flinched. Jesus would not let the ends justify the means, but he would do what was right at every moment. He would obey his Father's will no matter what came and he shuts Satan down, quoting again from Deuteronomy, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only."

Jesus stopped Satan each time using God's very word. He would trust

everything God said. Jesus would never put God to the test, which is really just another kind of distrust. Instead, Jesus had full faith in God, trusting *everything* God says. Jesus knew the long road ahead of him, but he knew all the more that there was a right thing to do at every moment: worship the Lord and serve him only. That's exactly what Jesus would always do.

Try as Satan did, there was no battle here. Satan thought he could destroy our champion and get Jesus to sin, but Jesus is and always has been more powerful than Satan. Satan never stood a chance.

This is our Champion; the Valiant One who Fights For Us. Though we could never win the victory on our own, Jesus and only Jesus can give us victory over Satan. No matter how many victories Satan has won in your life, no matter the sins Satan has trapped you in, no matter the accusations he can make against you, our Champion came out of the fight with Satan unscathed. Through faith, God replaces our defeat with Christ's victory, our sin with Jesus' perfect life.

Dear friends, make it your prayer that God help us to see the devastation that Satan has wrought in our lives. Pray that God show us just how many arrows Satan has pointed at us. But pray all the more that God focus your eyes on our Champion. Let these words ever echo in your mind: For Us Fights the Valiant One. Amen.