

WHICH WAY SHOULD WE GO?

(Matthew 4: 1-11)

Intro: I don't remember anymore where I got it.

-Some novelty store.

#No doubt.

-It was a gag gift.

#For my brother.

-It was a cap.

#With two bills.

*One bill cocked to the left.

*One bill cocked to the right.

#Lettering on the cap read:

*I'M THE LEADER.

*WHICH WAY SHOULD WE GO?

Our lessons for today ask the same question.

-When faced with temptation.

#Which way should we go?

I. Jesus Was In The Wilderness.

A. Wilderness.

1. Empty place.

a. Desolate place.

b. God-forsaken place.

2. Wordless place.

a. Words for wilderness.

-Hebrew.

-Greek.

b. Mean "wordless."

-Without a word.

-Without the word.

B. Jesus Is There.

1. For forty days and forty nights.

a. He's there.

b. He's fasting.

2. Why?

- a. I think it is like Jesus' spring training.
 - It's almost baseball season.
 - #Now that the Super Bowl is behind us.
 - For the St. Louis Cardinals.
 - #Spring training begins on Thursday.
 - *When pitchers and catchers report.
 - #It's the beginning of their 40 days.
 - *To prepare for the regular season.
 - +Which begins already on March 25.
 - =It's early this year.
 - =There may be some games snowed out.
- b. Jesus is preparing for his regular season.
 - Teaching.
 - Preaching.
 - Healing.
- c. Jesus is getting in shape.
 - Spiritual shape.
 - For the grueling journey.
 - #That will eventually take him to:
 - *His playoffs.
 - *His World Series.
 - +In Jerusalem
 - +On Golgotha.
 - +On a cross.
 - Jesus is getting ready.
 - #For 40 days and 40 nights.

C. The Devil Is There.

1. In the wilderness.
 - a. In this God-forsaken place.
 - b. In this wordless place.
 - Bringing his version of the word.
2. Same thing had happened in the Garden of Eden.
 - a. God had put the man and the woman (Adam and Eve) in the garden.
 - God had set them free.
 - But God had also set limits.
 - #They were free to eat of any tree in the garden.
 - *Except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
 - #How can we know what freedom is?
 - *If we don't know what the limits are.
 - #Man and woman knew freedom.
 - *But they also knew there were limits.

- b. Along comes the serpent.
 - Nowhere in the fall story in Genesis 3.
 - #Is the serpent identified as:
 - *Devil.
 - *Satan.
 - #That identification actually occurs in the Book of Revelation.
 - *Revelation 12:9.
 - +Beginning is the end.
 - +End is the beginning.
 - Serpent comes with his version of the word.
 - #Serpent says:
 - *"Look at this tree!"
 - *"Doesn't that fruit look good?"
 - *"Wouldn't you like to try some of that?"
 - #Woman says:
 - *"Oh, no!"
 - *"We can't eat from that tree."
 - *"In fact, we can't even touch it."
 - #Serpent says:
 - *"Why not?"
 - #Woman says:
 - *"Because God said:"
 - + "If you eat that fruit."
 - + "If you so much as touch it."
 - + "That very day you will die."
 - #Serpent says:
 - *"Oh, come on!"
 - *"You don't believe that, do you?"
 - *"You won't die."
 - *"But you will become like God."
 - + "Know good and evil."
- c. This was the first temptation.
 - To do what God said.
 - #Live within the limits.
 - Or to try to become like God.
 - #To become more than they were meant to be.
- d. Which way should they go?
 - It was a tough choice.
 - They were deceived with what sounded like the truth.
 - #They didn't die.
 - *At least not physically.
 - *At least not that day.

#They did become like God.

*In the sense:

#They knew good and evil.

*In fact, at the end of Genesis 3.

#God says:

*"What are we going to do with these people?"

+ "Now that they have become like us."

+ "Knowing good and evil."

=Genesis 3:22.

*Up until that point.

#All they had known was good.

*Genesis 1:4,10,12,18,21,25,31.

*Now their eyes are opened.

#They know evil.

#They know that they are naked.

#They know they've been exposed.

#They know they have something to be ashamed of.

#They know they have something to hide.

3. Devil works on us the same way.

a. We know the limits.

b. But all too often we are tempted to cross the line.

-Temptations sound so good.

-Temptations sometimes sound oh, so Godly.

-Temptations are very real.

#Which way should we go?

4. Devil worked on Jesus.

a. These temptations are real.

-Yes, Jesus is God.

-But Jesus is God in human form.

#When he's in the wilderness.

*Fasting for 40 days and 40 nights.

#He's hungry.

*As you would be.

*As I would be.

+In fact, I would be long past hungry.

+I would be so crabby and grouchy.

=You wouldn't want to be around me.

+That's where Satan loves to work.

b. Satan went to work on Jesus.

-Not tempting him to become like God.

-Jesus was already like God.

-Jesus was God.

- But challenging his divine identity.
 - #Jesus' baptism.
 - #Transfiguration.
 - *Divine voice from the heavenly cloud said:
 - + "This is my beloved Son."
 - #Now Satan says:
 - *"If you are the Son of God,"
 - + "Turn these stones into bread."
 - + "Jump off of the temple."
 - = Pinnacle of the Temple.
 - Southeast corner of the Temple Mount.
 - #Beneath it was the Kidron Valley.
 - *It was a long way down.
 - #At the bottom were rocks.
 - Satan even knows how to make his temptations seem Godly.
 - #To bring his version of the word.
 - *Into the wilderness.
 - + "If you jump, don't the Scriptures say:"
 - = "God will send his angels to catch you,"
 - = "So that you won't even stub your toe."
 - Psalm 91: 11-12.
 - #To imitate God.
 - *Taking Jesus up onto a high mountain.
 - *Showing him all the kingdoms of the world.
 - *Telling him:
 - + "All of this can be yours,"
 - = "If the price is right."
 - = "If you will bow down and worship me."
- c. Jesus was tempted.
 - Those temptations were real.
 - They were powerful.
 - They were seductive.
 - #Which way should he go?

II. Jesus Was In The Wilderness In The Spirit.

A. Why Was Jesus In The Wilderness In The Spirit?

1. Jesus is playing offense, not defense.
 - a. Jesus is at the beginning of his public ministry.
 - b. He's just been:
 - Baptized.
 - Declared to be the Son of God.
 - #Matthew 3: 13-17.

- c. But he doesn't wait for Satan to sneak up on him.
 - To ambush him.
 - #In a surprise attack.
 - d. Jesus goes on the offensive.
 - Into the wilderness.
 - Into this God-forsaken territory.
 - Into this wordless environment.
 - In the Spirit.
2. In the Spirit.
- a. Jesus knows who he is.
 - b. Jesus knows the Holy Scriptures.
 - c. Jesus knows which way to go.
- B. Do We Know Which Way To Go?
1. We don't have to be like:
- a. God.
 - b. Jesus.
 - To know which way to go.
2. In the Spirit.
- a. We hear the divine voice in the heavenly cloud at our baptism:
 - “You are my beloved son.”
 - “You are my beloved daughter.”
 - b. We are able to discern.
 - Between the heavenly voice and other voices.
 - c. We are guided through our periods in the wilderness.
 - d. We are able to deal with our temptations.
 - e. We know which way to go.
3. Spirit comes to us.
- a. In water.
 - b. In word.
 - c. In bread.
 - d. In wine.
 - As we go through our Lenten disciplines.
 - As we go through our spring training drills.
4. Satan knows our weak spots.
- a. Food.
 - Too much.
 - Wrong kind.
 - b. Drink.
 - Too much.
 - Wrong kind.
 - c. Power.
 - d. Greed.
 - e. Lust.
 - f. Gossip.
 - g. Lies.
 - h. Doubt.
 - i. Unbelief.

5. We need to know our weak spots.
 - a. So that we can build up our defenses.
 - b. So that we can be prepared before temptation comes.
 - c. So that we can know which way to go.
 - When I played Little League baseball.
 - #We had a great coach.
 - *We had a pretty good team.
 - *We won the Little League World Series.
 - +Little League World Series of Stevens Point, WI.
 - #Our coach used to hammer it into our heads.
 - *When we were in the field.
 - +When we were playing defense.
 - *"Know what you're going to do with the ball:"
 - + "Before it's hit to you."
 - + "Before it's pitched."
 - #If I'm the shortstop.
 - *There's a runner on first.
 - +With less than two outs.
 - *If I get a ground ball.
 - +I'm going to go to second base.
 - =Maybe we can get a double play.
 - #So if the ball comes to me.
 - *I don't have to think about what I'm going to do.
 - *I just do it.
 - *I just react.
 - +I don't have to stand around.
 - =Like a tee-baller.
 - =Wondering what I do now.
 - Throwing the ball all over the field.
 - +I know what to do.
 - =Because I've practiced.
- Ozzie Smith.
- #Hall of Fame shortstop.
 - *For the St. Louis Cardinals.
 - #Used to practice throwing to second base.
 - *Without looking.
 - +He knew where second base was.
 - #When the ball came to him.
 - *He didn't have to think about what to do.
 - *He just did it.
 - *He just reacted.
 - *He knew what to do.
 - +Because he had practiced.
 - =And practiced and practiced.

6. Lent is our spring training.
 - a. Time for us to practice.
 - b. Time for us to discipline ourselves.
 - With prayer.
 - With Scripture reading.
 - #So that when we are tempted.
 - *We don't have to:
 - +Stop.
 - +Think too hard about what to do.
 - *If we are thinking about temptation.
 - +We are already half hooked.
 - =Aren't we?
 - *We will know which way to go.
 - Prayer and Scripture.
 - #You can do it on your own.
 - #You can do it in your 5x5 small groups.
 - #You have other options during Lent.
 - *Wednesday evening soup suppers and worship.
 - +Prayer.
 - +Scripture.
 - *New Sunday morning Bible study topic.
 - +Starting in a couple of weeks.
 - +Taught by Blaine Frierson.
 - =Gospel parallels.
 - +If you're not already participating.
 - =This is a good time to start.
- c. It's part of our spring training.
 - So that when temptation comes.
 - #And temptation is going to come.
 - We can know which way to go.

Concl: We don't need to be like God.

- Because our faith is in the One:
 - #Who is more like God than we can ever hope to be.
 - #Who is the Son of God.
 - #Who is himself the Word (John 1:1).
- Jesus knew which way to go.
 - #Through temptation.
 - #Through suffering.
 - #Through crucifixion.
 - #Through resurrection.
- Through our faith in him.
 - #Through the Spirit.
 - *We'll know which way to go.

