

# Monday, February 22

Today's Reading: Matthew Chapter 4

Today's Devotional Message is by Pastor Jeff Thackston

*He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him. Matthew 4:21-22*

First off, I would suggest that you read the entire chapter 4 of Matthew's gospel. In it are two very interesting pieces of Christ's life. I can only begin to scour the surface on both. The first section deals with an often studied account of the 3 temptations of Christ. The story is familiar. Jesus is on a fast in the desert and Ol' Satan himself shows up to tempt.

Several things should be brought to our attention here. One is that it was in the midst of a spiritual retreat, a time of meditation, a moment of renewal (if you will) in Jesus' life that the temptation was brought to bear. One could speculate that there are a couple of reasons for this. On one hand, you can say that Satan was not very smart in that he took the time in Christ's life when it could be most argued that he was a pinnacle of strength. The burdens of travel, constant preaching, throngs of people had not yet descended on him. He was actually gearing up for that time in his life. Sort of like a boxer training for a fight. I would argue, however, that this ploy of Lucifer was not much different than what he tries on us. You see it was at that moment in time when Christ was preparing for the greatest spiritual clash the world had known since the first temptation in Eden. Don't you find in your life though, similar events occurring? Doesn't it seem that when you are really ready to make a difference in the world, you are ready to finally sell out completely to God, when you are at the brink of a spiritual revival in your life ... isn't it precisely at that time when Satan brings everything he has to bear down on you? That is what he was doing to Christ .... That is what he does to us.

So how do we combat this onslaught? The simple answer is to take a cue from Christ ... answer each temptation with scripture ... fight toe to toe with the deceiver. I think this is of course a good tactic (I am sure that Jesus is pleased that I endorse His methods). I also want to look at the disciples for some guidance.

Fortunately, that guidance is contained right here in the same chapter. The best way to stem temptation and to lead a Christ-like life is to totally surrender yourself to God. Did you read verses 21 and 22? James and John were working. They had security. They had a vocation. Yet in the midst of that, they were called to simply follow Jesus, and astonishingly enough .... They did! Read the scripture again ... no promises, no expectations ... just simple words, Follow me.

It was in those simple words however, that there must have been a power in their delivery, a force, a fire, spiritual pull, much like those moments that we have when we know that Christ is calling us to something special and Satan is pulling us in the other direction.

I will say that the key to overcoming that pull to the "dark side" is to emulate those two men of old. Simply, drop your nets and follow Jesus. When we follow someone, there is an expressed idea that the person we are following knows where he is going. There is a certain amount of confidence that they will get you to the desired destination. It is also implied that I don't know where I am going; I trust you to get me there. My thought is for all of us, in the midst of difficulty or temptation, follow the lead of James and John. Drop everything we are holding on to, don't look back ... simply .... Wholeheartedly ... follow Jesus.