

### **Matthew 4:1-11:**

Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying 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, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

### **Agape Sunday:**

As most of you know, I was born and raised in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti. I have family members currently living in Haiti and I continuously pray for them because I fear for their safety due to the ongoing civil unrest. The last time I traveled to Haiti was in 2018. My mom and I planned the trip, we met there and stayed with her side of the family. We promised them that we'll come back to spend more time with them not knowing that things were about to go from bad to worse.

Haiti is a different world! A beautiful country but a place of suffering due to dire poverty. Quite often, I would hear people who have visited Haiti tell me how it was a life changing experience for them because it made them realized just how blessed they are to have been raised under different circumstances.

I was fortunate enough to have access to education, but it is not always the case for Haitian children. This is why I am very touched by the work this church has done in building St Matthieu's school for the children of Chapoteau. One of the many things that the countryside of Haiti lacks is schools. Education changes one's life and this work will impact many lives in a positive manner. In my native tongue, I would like to say "Mèsi tout moun" meaning "Thank you all" for supporting this cause.

**Sermon:** Our passage for today begins with “Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted”. The wilderness can be a place of solitude, a place of fear, and sadness. We need to understand this because when we are going through a wilderness stage in life, our experience would be different if we are aware of what is happening to us and around us and that is we are being tested! We can see our situation as a calling from God. For me, it meant quitting my teaching job in New Jersey, moving far away from family and friends to come to Virginia for Seminary.

Most of you present today would agree with me when I say that life is full of ups and downs. At times, life doesn't seem manageable, and one thing Satan is good at is attacking us in our most vulnerable moments.

Satan tempted Jesus three times: First, he appeared to Jesus telling Jesus he can turn the rocks into bread knowing that Jesus was hungry because he had been fasting. Jesus' answer was ““One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” That was His way of telling Satan that it is God who sustains us and provides for our needs. The second time, Satan told Jesus “go to the peak of the temple and jump down because if you are truly the son of God, angels will rescue you and Jesus replied “ It is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” In other words, do not manipulate Scripture, do not pressure

God” By now, you would think that Satan would give up but nope, /he tries again for the third time. He showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world then told Him, “All of it can be yours if you get down on your knees and worship me” but Jesus said, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’” Showing Satan, He’s very much aware that our God is a jealous God. That would have been idolatry! Jesus showed His respect and obedience to God, the Father by His difficult choices in moments of weakness. He answered to Satan’s temptations with the word of God and used Scripture against the enemy. We too should resist temptations with God’s word. That’s why it’s important for us to know the bible and live by it. This can be reinforced by us making a commitment to reading our bibles, memorizing verses and meditating. This is necessary because it weaponizes us when temptation comes. One thing about temptations is that they offer quick, easy solutions however; the consequences of those temporary “solutions” last for long periods of time.

I remember being enrolled at New Jersey City University and not making much working part time as a babysitter. I was so tempted to get a credit card as a way to buy myself some books and other school supplies, but I kept on praying about that. Right before the semester started, I was able to get a full-time job as a preschool teacher. Yes, that credit card would have helped me temporarily but every time I think about those high interest rates I was going to deal with, I just say “Thank you

Lord for that teaching position!” What might not have seen as much to some was an answer to my prayers and my suffering. Knowing that Christ walks with us makes us patient but also bold. Bold to say no to temptations. It is rather comforting to know about God’s faithfulness and how He will show up for us. This hope is where we can get our strength from because God’s love is our security.

The people of Haiti especially the children of Chapoteau are going through their own wilderness yet still. They demonstrate total trust in God just like in this passage; Jesus demonstrated His total trust in God. Jesus’s understanding and acceptance of His mission on earth are displayed in this passage. Jesus carried with Him into the wilderness the story of Israel’s testing and accomplished what Israel couldn’t do. These temptations Jesus encountered embody the temptations that we as Christians encounter. We can follow Jesus’ way with confidence because we know that He has already conquered death!

**Conclusion:** My brothers and sisters in Christ, I know that I said a lot but if you don’t remember anything I say today, know this right here: God will meet you in the wilderness! So, wherever you find yourself, and it does not matter if it’s the wilderness of grief, the wilderness of anxiety, the wilderness of uncertainty, God and his word stand ready to meet you there! Amen!