



Matt's Monthly Newsletter



As we both approach Easter, I am preparing to preach on Jesus time in the wilderness and consider again the importance of what was said. In this story, Satan appears and his efforts are to distract and ultimately deviate Jesus from the cross.

He tempts Jesus in three ways, which Henri Nouwen remarked as important for Christian understanding.

He is tempted with the need to be **powerful**, the need to be **spectacular** and the need to be **relevant**. A legion of angels would be spectacular, imagine the sky filling with angelic hosts to protect and enforce God's will. The worship as he stood atop the temple would be powerful, imagine crowds gathering in the thousands to worship, which Revelation paints an eventual picture of what the Lamb has done.

But it is turning stones into bread is where I was focused. Nouwen continues that this is the need to be relevant. We all want to be relevant, so that people could see what Christ in us looks like to make day to day sense of life. That way people could experience something of his grace. Our Lent course is exploring that in some depth. So, what was Nouwen thinking about?

Let's ask some questions? Who would have the bread? Surely the poor and marginalised. And they needed it, Judea was economically divided, most of the land owned by a small proportion of landowners who charged high rents, and so, many were poor, struggling to make ends meet. What about when the bread ran out? Would Jesus have to keep on providing bread in this way?

And if he carried on like that, wouldn't Jesus then get stuck in a cycle of

patching things up, while never really achieving his goal? In Jesus' response, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God*, we see both the acceptance of his situation [– he had something better that they needed] and the hope for what lay ahead – [the promises of God]. Though there would be ridicule, rejection and suffering, instead of worship and praise and vindication, it was more important he remained faithful to His heavenly Father's ultimate plan.

The temptation to be relevant appears to be to do whatever the world said it needed, but not what God willed. The world is certainly a needy place. In fact, I've held onto this newsletter until we had got past Revelation chapter 6 in the evening series, because it helps understand how real the temptations to lead us away from trusting God can be.

In this account, there's a powerful lesson of endurance and the revealed will of God. Each temptation would take Jesus away from his purpose, but it is at the cross where he ultimately demonstrated how powerful, spectacular and relevant he really is, even so, *'When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.'* **1 Peter 2:23** Jesus, the Son of God, chose not to exercise the power, spectacle and relevance they expected, but in doing so he revealed the life only God could give.

It is important to acknowledge what we are going through, but not to let it overwhelm us. When we remind ourselves of God's call on our lives, we can stand. We occasionally pray this prayer in the evening services. Why not give yourself some space to acknowledge where you are, but remember that God is faithful.

Right now I feel.....

But I know.....

So I will.....